[page 39] **“You are Dead, the Square is Dead”: The 1989 Chinese Pro-Democracy Movement**

by Karen EGGLESTON

You are dead, the Square is dead.

They say now is a great victory,

 thinking that death can protect their criminal existence.

We live on,

We give our hearts to you,the dead ones,

to let you live again through our lives,

to complete the mission which you left incomplete.

by Gu Cheng and Yang Lian

The unprecedented student and mass demonstrations in China starting in April 1989,and especially the massacre in central Beijing on the night of June 3-4,called world attention to events in China. Those were weeks filled with determination, courage, hope,excitement, sacrifice,anger, tension, despair, and tragedy. Why? If “an answer” is to be found, history cannot be ignored. This paper will first review the historical background of student-led popular protest in China, then the actual sequence of events that spring,and lastly consider the aftermath of the massacre and what may lie ahead for China.2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Student protest in China dates back to 542 B.C. when students in village schools protested to the government only nine years after Confucius was born. In 1126 students at the Imperial College, after petitioning the emperor to resist the Northern invaders, led hundreds of thousands of ordinary Chinese citizens in protests which resulted in a change of foreign and domestic policy. Other student protests and strikes continued during the Sung and Ming dynasties, often involving students in factional political struggles.3 (Involvement in, and manipulation by, factional political struggles continues to be one of the least successful characteristics of Chinese [page 40] student protest—witness 1987 and Hu Yaobang, 1989 and Zhao Ziyang).

Twentieth century student activism, although distinct from its dynastic precedents in many respects—a modern educational system, younger students, and most importantly, nationalistic issues—nevertheless inherits its legitimacy from the longer history of Chinese student protest.4 In 1895, young provincial literati who were in Beijing for the national examinations gathered in front of Tiananmen, the Gate of Heavenly Peace leading to the Forbidden City Imperial residence. They gathered at that auspicious and politically crucial place to protest the humiliating terms of the Threaty of Shimonoseki. Their protest,as Andrew Nathan has pointed out,5 was in many ways transitional: traditional in form but modern in content,for their themes of nationalism, modernization, and “saving China” continue, in essence, today.

The real foundation of the modern Chinese student movement, however, occurred almost a quarter century later, seventy years ago: the May Fourth Movement of 1919. Approximately three thousand Chinese college and university students gathered in front of Tiananmen protesting China’s humiliating policy toward Japan. Their action led to months of demonstrations and strikes by students,workers,and merchants,the dismissal of prominent officials seen to be traitors to China’s national interests, China’s refusal to sign the Versaille Peace Treaty, and the promotion of an unprecedented Chinese intellectual revolution.

The year 1919 was just the beginning. From the continued protest of Japanese aggression and exhortations to “save China,” through the “co- optation-with-a-twist’’ after the Communist victory in 1949,the history of the student movement reflected the main currents of Chinese political history.

Twentieth century Chinese student activists in many ways have inherited from their Confucian forbears what can be termed a “Confucian protest ideology,” a “protest ideology”being not the issues of protest themselves, but rather “the ideology which delineates the student role in, and obligation to, protest.”6 This “Confucian protest ideology” existed within the rigidly ritualistic and dynastically manipulated institution of Confucian philosophy, as an obligatory, moralistic duty to express loyal dissent.

A true Confucian scholar was obliged by Confucian precepts to express dissent to the emperor, even at great physical danger to himself, to point out imperial errors and to advocate correctly virtuous policies. Such dissent embodied the highest form of loyalty: the belief that with self- [page 41] initiated reform, the emperor could govern most correctly, fulfill the mandate of heaven and promote the welfare of the people and the kingdom. This tradition, although rarified by the years and transformed by China’s revolutionary twentieth century history, nevertheless has left its imprint on Chinese student protest to today.

The notion of an educated elite with a special political role to play, embedded in Confucianism, fit nicely into the modern nationalist tool of Marxism-Leninism, and meshed with the Chinese reality of an elite group of intellectuals with a vital role to play in China’s modernization process. Even as student protesters attacked Confucianism itself—in the May 4th Movement, in the Cultural Revolution, and in 1989 by decrying the “feudalistic” tendencies such as nepotism and corruption apparent in contemporary China—they nevertheless could and did retain the erstwhile Confucian notion of an intellectual elite with a moralistic duty to express loyal dissent. Later in this paper, those facets of the recent student protests which reflect this heritage will be elaborated upon.

The terms “loyal” and “dissent” were often contradictory, especially in the eyes of the rulers. What is left today of loyalty in dissent—i.e., calls for reform rather than revolution, and appeals to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to change itself rather than for the people to overthrow its rule entirely—stems more from political realism than Confucian loyalty. The CCP, despite its corruption, its hollow ideological appeals and its murderous grip on its own aging rule, is nevertheless currently the only viable political power in the PRC.

The study of Chinese student protest history reveals several important points. First of all, nationalism, defined in terms of struggling for national sovereignty, national strengthening, and national modernization, has been the hallmark of twentieth century student activism. From protesting the humiliating terms of defeat by Japan in 1895,through opposition to Japanese aggression in terms of the Twenty-one Demands in 1915, the takeover of Shandong and the Versailles Peace Treaty in 1919, student calls for a united front against Japanese invasion in the 1930s, and protesting civil war in the 40s, to visions of a strong and modern China which did not reflect the CCP’s version of “truth” in the very different outbursts of 1956, 1966, 1976, 1978, 1986 and 1989—nationalism has always been, in a popular official Chinese phrase, the “key link.” The most common student slogan of the movement this year was, “The students love the country,and loving the country is not a crime!”

A second historical fact of Chinese student protest is that Tianan- [page 42] men—the gate itself, the square only after 1949—has been the focus. In 1895 and again in the famous protests of 1919, students gathered in front of the gate; during the Sino-Japanese war, the capital fell to invaders; then Mao Zedong, after proudly proclaiming the People’s Republic of China in 1949 from atop the gate, tore at the fabric of the new polity in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, and accepted a Red Guard arm band atop Tiananmen. In the 1976 Tiananmen Square Uprising, and repeatedly in 1985, 1986,and 1989, the square was the destination of marches, the gathering point for protesters, and the most sensitive political symbol for the CCP. Just a march by the gate and the square, on April 27th and a week later on May 4th, proved the triumph of the student demonstrations. In the weeks that followed, the battle over the square symbolized the ebb and flow of the political upheaval itself. Between the hunger strikers and the reception for Gorbachev, between the students and people on one side and troops trying to enforce martial law on the other, everything centered on the square. In the end “saving” the hardliners’ “face,” with the square its image, led to the bloody June 3-4 crackdown.

Tiananmen has been and inevitably will continue to be used, and misused, as a symbol, by the pro-democracy movement, by the government and Party,and by the international media. Recently, almost all references to the bloody crackdown speak of the “massacre in Tiananmen,” despite the fact that most of the violence did not take place on the square itself. The Chinese government uses the supposedly completely bloodless recapture of the Square by government forces as a technical loophole with which to refute condemnation of the “Tragedy in Tiananmen.”

Thirdly, modern Chinese history suggests that student-led popular protest goes through stages in which the motives, issues, and political players change, often in somewhat predictable patterns. Most protest movements begin with a direct appeal by students to the government, followed by direct appeals to the people and segments thereof (e.g., fellow students and intellectuals, workers, merchants, party members, journalists), appeals directed to different ruling factions, feedback by the populous, and appeals to fellow citizens based on the martyrdom of student protesters. Of course, all of these are also open to manipulation.

Historically, appeals to the people to rise up against victimization of dissenters has had varying effectiveness. In the 1930s, condemnation of the government for harsh suppression was much less successful than appeals to form a united front against the common threat of Japanese [page 43] aggression. Again in 1989,early “victimization” rallying cries—urging Chinese to cry out against the beating up of students by police following the confrontation at Xinhuamen—had little effect. Broader appeals to nationalistic causes, such as anti-inflation, anti-corruption, and pro-press freedom slogans, aroused greater sympathy and affirmed the students, nationalistic credentials. Although setting out to be martyrs is an unfair characterization of most student protest activities, the sacrifices which students make in the struggle are not unacknowledged by the students themselves as a way to underscore their cause. For example, John Israel records the attitude of a Chinese activist preparing for the famous December 9,1935 demonstration, who thought that “certainly our influence would be still wider if there were deaths.”7 This last spring, in an interview in late May, Chinese student leader Chai Ling said,” People ask me what the next step is. I feel very sad. I want to tell them the next step is bloodshed. Only when the square is washed in blood will the masses wake up. But how can I tell my fellow students that? They will do that if asked... but they are still children.”8

The June 4th massacre, the agony of innocent and even uninvolved lives snuffed out by a senile and power-hungry octogenarian oligarchy— this tragedy is nonetheless, as exiled movement leaders have affirmed, the closest to assurance of victory in the future for the pro-democracy movement as there could be.

 One final lesson to be drawn from history is that most Chinese intellectuals, both before and after the CCP came to power, embraced communist ideology basically out of nationalistic yearning for a way to “save China,” to modernize and strengthen their homeland. The party itself periodically embraced and then attacked the intellectuals, distrustful of their ultimate loyalties, perhaps rightfully so. Communism for the majority was never a goal in itself, but a means to “save China.” Democracy is an “ism” of wide appeal and vague definition mostly because it, too, is a tool with which to “save China.”

A knowledge of the history of Chinese student movements helps to shed light upon not only what parts of the legacy still shape the present, but also how student activists and their intellectual advisors have learned from past mistakes. One prominent example is what the student activists of 1989 learned from the shorter protests of 1986—87:

The protesters learned to organize meticulously and to guard against infiltration by agents trying to discredit the movement by yelling ‘‘down with the Communist Party!” They learned to present more specific peti-[page 44]  tions and demands. In fact, some would legitimately argue that the protesters got so specific that in the end they left no leeway for the government to negotiate and save face. They learned to stick to nationalistic slogans that had an appeal to the general populous and specifically to workers, such as anti-corruption, anti-inflation, pro-rights to organize and demonstrate, and pro-press freedom slogans, instead of the need for higher funding for education, better school conditions, and better job assignments and salaries for college graduates. In 1986, press freedom was a secondary and later-phase issue, whereas in 1989,press freedom was among the initial issues of student protests In 1986, a student-worker alliance died before it even hatched; two and a half years later, workers joined the student demonstrators at first as supportive spectators and later as participants, establishing an autonomous workers, union on the eve of the declaration of martial law.9

Although CCP leadership disunity was a key catalyst in allowing the movement to develop, one thing which perhaps the activists did not learn as well from previous protests is the danger and fickleness of emphasizing or appealing to individuals in the leadership. Mao Zedong called out the so-called “little generals “ in 1966, exiling them to the countryside a few years later. Deng Xiaoping hero of the 1976 Tiananmen Uprising, by the late 1980s had become a neo-Mao in his own right, clinging to power through force and destroying self-appointed successors. Hu Yaobang,at first a villain in the early stages of the 1986 protests, became a victim for the cause in 1987 and was by 1989 practically a “saint” for democracy in China. His successor Zhao Ziyang, originally seen as a corrupt high official like all the others, suddenly became the student hero, then dubbed the arch-villain and toppled by the Deng-Yang-Li Peng triumvirate and their octogenarian powerbase. A justified conclusion is that without change in the political system, nothing will ultimately change.

In fact, despite lessons in specific tactics, one may question just how far China has come in the 70 years from 1919 to 1989; the slogans, calling for Mr. Science and Mr. Democracy to save China, live on, and they will surely reappear in even greater force before the end of the century.

Numerous parts of the movement last spring indicate that elements of a “Confucian protest ideology” continue to animate China’s young dissenting elite. Loyal dissent—that complicated, often contradictory idea—was evident from the start. Students abandoned their Mapai (Mazhang faction) and Tuopai (TOEFL faction), symbols of their disillusionment, political apathy, and selfcenteredness, and instead committed themselves to [page 45] sacrifice for national hope. Students called upon the Party to live up to its own anti-corruption, pro- “democracy” statements, and to reform to save the nation’s future. They presented their call at considerable personal risk, and they knew it. The spirit of sacrifice for the nation inspired protesters to defy previously effective official threats of retaliation. The early slogans which called to uphold the CCP and quoted Deng’s reformist statements were not pure sarcasm, but rather expressed a fervent hope that real progress was possible. “The people love the PLA and the PLA loves the People” was a cry of bittersweet sarcasm and desperate authenticity: please don’t go against the People!

Wuerkaixi, the student leader who scolded Chinese Premier Li Peng on national TV, avowed that he had originally wanted to join the Party. The hunger strike was a clever tactic, a world-media attention-grabbing maneuver, but it was also the ultimate in loyal dissent. In these early stages of the movement, the hope was genuine that loyal dissent would inspire begrudging but authentic progress.

Even the cynics who would insist that students were ultimately aiming to topple the government from the start—not to be denied for some— nevertheless have to admit that up to that point in late May the government still had the option of relenting, negotiating, and moving forward on anti-corruption measures without resorting to violence. Such is the essence of loyal dissent.10

When the Party and government leaders visited hunger strikers hos-pitalized after collapsing from exhaustion, one student’s talk with the leaders, broadcast more than once on national television, embodied what appears to be the modern Chinese protest ideology. He spoke of the serious problems facing the nation—e.g., overpopulation, a low economic base, a poor educational level—which confront any person or group ruling China. The people, however, were losing hope in the Party. He said he took the drastic measure of hunger striking because, “If the CCP has no hope, China has no hope. “ He emphasized that the leaders had to use the knife against corruption by starting with their own sons (cong erzi kai dao) in order to restore faith in the Party.

In addition to initially loyal dissent, the influence of Confucian protest ideology on the student protesters is also evidenced by the students’ conviction that they were an elite on a mission for the common people. The press receiving office and press conferences on the Beijing University campus and other campuses definitely effused an aura of eliteness. That student leaders struggled among themselves for the ultimate leadership[page 46] posts was perhaps sadly inevitable. Apparently Wuerkaixi was voted out of top leadership for reasons other than purely tactical differences. Phil Cunningham observes that Chai Ling became supreme commander in late May largely because she lacked the ego problems of other student leaders.11

As one observer noted, although Westerners seem to assume that the Chinese student protesters want the same liberal democracy which the West sees itself as enjoying, the Chinese students “in their pursuit of democracy,... created a system much like the one they wanted to reform: operated on personal connections, or guanxi.... The self-governing Association had a standing committee, liaison offices with provincial students’ organizations and the foreign press, and a tireless propaganda department.”12 A member of Gaozilian, the protesting students’ top organization, complained on the morning of fateful June 3rd,”We don’t decide any policy. People just sit around arguing over who’s going to fill what position and what their responsibilities in the hierarchy should be,” Earlier in May, one Beijing University student was called a traitor for opposing an on-campus demonstration in favor of continuing a class boycott. She responded defiantly, “What kind of democracy is that, if I can’t even give my opinion? It’s no better than the Cultural Revolution!”13

Just as the government always threatened the activists by harking back to the Cultural Revolution, so the activists themselves could not escape their own history and ideological conditioning. Reportedly a student leader described Wuerkaixi as “having no major errors in his thought.” The May 4th edition of Beijing University’s independent student newspaper claimed that “the tide of democracy allows no obstruction; all must comply with this trend. If not, they will be condemned by history.”14 The same rhetoric which once pronounced the inevitability of Communism, now condemns Marxism itself to the “garbage heap of history.” The intolerance of opposition, however, seems identical.

The elite factor is also well illustrated by the competition between Beijing University, home of the May 4th Movement, and Beijing Normal University, Wuerkaixi’s home university and one of the most prominent in the 1989 movement. At Beida, as Beijing University is known, after a big character poster announced the hunger strike, only forty students signed up. According to one commentator, when the news came back to Beida that 200 students volunteered to hunger strike from the Normal University, the Beida number of volunteers shot up to three hundred.15

The outpouring of support and concern for the hunger strikers from society, the extreme sensitivity and sympathy of the official press, the [page 47] efforts of officials to show at least the image of dialogue, the careful official enumeration of how the government sent food, medicine, and shelter to aid the hunger strikers in an otherwise highly condemnatory report16—these all illustrate the power, acknowledged even by the CCP and government leaders, of the hunger-striking image: the youthful intellectual elite sacrificing themselves for the betterment of the nation. One might note that none of the public executions were of student or intellectual leaders, and even the most severe official reports affirmed that the majority of the students were patriotic.

Thus, the history of Chinese student activism and the notion of righteous intellectual dissent helped lay the groundwork for the development of the 1989 pro-democracy movement, to which we now turn.

SPRING 1989

After ten years of Deng Xiaoping’s Open Door, reform policies were meeting increasingly hard times. “Friction” between the “two track” mixed market and planned economy, and the opportunity for manipulation between the two by corrupt guandao, were undermining the economy. In the Fall of 1988,after efforts at price reform unleashed double digit inflation and large scale, panic buying, the leadership initiated the Zhili Zhengdun campaign, the official catch phrase for cracking down on inflation while dealing with corruption. “Deepen reform” was tacked on to the end of Zhilizhengdun to try to convince the world that reforms would continue, not merely be put on hold. Li Peng and other hardline conservatives had gained the upper hand. The Party admitted mistakes in the implementation of reforms, but grew impatient with those who emphasized the problems lying ahead instead of the progress which had been made. As the 70th anniversary of the May 4th Movement approached, young intellectuals recognized that the heros of 70 years previous—Mr. science and, most of all, Mr. Democracy—were still far from accomplishing China’s salvation. The government tried to emphasize science and patriotism; students, in at first small but ever-swelling numbers, opted for nationalism and Mr. Democracy.

The Chinese pro-democracy movement last spring went through at least five discernible stages.17 The first phase developed in the week and a half between the death of Hu Yaobang on April 15th, and the People’s Daily editorial of April 26th which condemned the budding movement as a small, villainous group inciting chaos in order to overthrow the CCP[page 48] and socialism. Typically, the movement began with big-character posters at Beida, other Beijing campuses, and other universities in major metropolitan areas, mourning Hu Yaobang’s death and expounding upon what he had come to represent: reform, liberalization, and democracy. There were calls for dialogue with the government, demonstrations in front of Xinhuamen (“New China Gate”), and even an attempt to storm Zhongnanhai, the Beijing government compound. Police chased away the demonstators and beat up several of them.

Student leaders learned a valuable lesson from previous movements and the storming of Xinhuamen: they must at all costs avoid any violence which would give the Party and government leadership an excuse to crack down on the movement, and they must guard against infiltration by those who would discredit the movement.

The press was not free to cover the reality of the student protests, and with each misrepresentation, the calls for freedom of the press would grow stronger and gain greater legitimacy and public support. Only by denying the official press a shred of proof for their condemnatory articles would the movement have a chance to convince a critical mass of people, journalists and Party members included, that the Party line which castigated their actions and motives was fallacious.

The students called not only for freedom of the press, of speech and of assembly, but also for the rehabilitation of Hu Yaobang and condemnation of the “anti-bourgois liberalization campaign” which followed Hu’s sacking in 1987. They also petitioned to have the personal finances of top officials made public and for corruption to be dealt with severely. Such were the “demands” listed on the student petition which three students held up as they knelt on the steps of the Great Hall of the People on April 22. An estimated fifty thousand fellow students on Tiananmen Square waited with them for premier Li Peng, or any government official, to come out to accept the petition. Fearing that they would be barred from the square on that Saturday, the day of’ the memorial service for Hu Yaobang, the students had come to the square the night before and had waited all night for the memorial service the following morning. No one came out to recognize the student petition. It was a day of mourning, not only for Hu Yaobang, but the complete disregard of the government for the petitioners’ concerns. Many were moved to tears.18 Chai ling reportedly said, “From that day on, I began to work for the governing body of the students.”19 The following Monday, April 24th, students began boycotting classes. At Beijing University, students held a large rally, and students at[page 49] several campuses began setting up their own speaker systems, broadcasting their petitions, their reasons for boycotting classes, and tapes of news from the Voice of America.

Deciding that things had gone too far, the Party leadership—its unity to be splintered to an unprecedented extent by the developing crisis—issued the April 26th editorial ‘‘take a clear stand against turmoil” which appeared on the front page of the People’s Daily, the Beijing Daily, and other newspapers. It characterized the movement as a throwback to the Cultural Revolution, incited by a small group who grabbed power from official student organizations, took over school speaker systems, and forced students not to attend class. Activists were labeled radicals who roamed about the country as the infamous Red Guards had, trying. to overthrow socialism and CCP rule, leading to disorder and lawlessness. If allowed to continue, the editorial emphasized, years of reform progress would be ruined and the country would descend into chaos.20

A joke among young Chinese intellectuals said that when Jiang Qing, Mao Zedong’s infamous wife and member of the Gang of Four, read the April 26th editorial in her jail cell, she cried “Let me out! It’s obvious that Yao Wenyuan21 is out and working, so I want out too!”

Despite this bitterly sarcastic joke, student dissenters took the editorial as no joking matter. The second phase of the movement began the next day, April 27th, when students angered by the harsh editorial, and especially for being characterized as yi xiao cuo—”a small group,” a term used to describe the Gang of Four—staged the largest student demonstration in China to date.

The estimated 50,000 students from over 30 colleges and universities, who demonstrated that Thursday, broke through several lines of policemen as the students chanted “The People love the People’s Police, and the People’s Police love the People!” By three or four that afternoon the student ranks were marching triumphantly past Tiananmen, and then continued to follow the second ring road on its circuit of the city, past the foreign resident section at Jianguomenwai and north again to their respective campuses. In well-led rounds, they chanted ‘‘The People’s Daily/ babbles like a clown/ central TV / turns truth upside down!”22, “The students’ petition is not turmoil!”; ‘‘Down with official corruption!;” and of course ‘‘The students love the country/ loving the country is not a crime!”

They were cheered on by some 250,000 citizens23 who lined the streets and gathered at bridges over the ring road to have the best view hours[page 50] before the students passed. People brought water, soda, and food to the students, most of whom marched a total of 25 miles from their campuses northwest of Beijing to the square and back on a clear, hot spring day without breaking ranks to stop for food or drink.

Everyone knew it was historic. A worker told me, ‘‘We really support the students, but we can’t be involved ourselves, or else the government will crack down on them.” A high school student came up to me near Tiananmen, and informed me that at least two high schools were also boycotting classes in support of the college students’ demonstrations. One elderly Chinese man who saw me taking pictures came over and said ‘‘duo zhao ji zhang”—take a few extra pictures today, as if to say, “Let everyone know of this great event.”

If Deng Xiaoping and other officials had counted on the students being cowed into submission by the editorial on the 26th—in the manner of “the emperor has spoken: thou shalt cease to dissent!”24—then they were overwhelmingly proven to have understimated the students’ resolve.

A People’s Daily editorial on April 29th, although emphasizing stability, nevertheless was more accomodating. On the same day, Chinese government spokesman, Yuanmu, held a “dialogue’’ with student representatives, televised live according to the students’ wishes. The participants were the official, not student-elected or dissenting student leaders. Gaozilian, the top umbrella student organization, declared that the meeting was not a dialogue at all. After watching it, I would agree that the students’ questions were by-and-large quite tame, Yuanmu’s attitute quite patronizing. A similar so-called dialogue was held April 30th between twenty-nine students from ten Beijing campuses and two leaders, Beijing mayor Chen Xitong and Education Minister Li Tieying. They were shows of conciliation by the government, and the students interested in authentic dialogue and tangible results dismissed them as such.

The hardliners made a show of their “great restraint,” saying that the editorial was never directed at the students in the first place, but rather at the villainous few who continued to plot and scheme. Perhaps the authorities knew that another demonstration the next week on the 70th anniversary of the May 4th movement was inevitable, and in the face of contradictory opinions within leadership ranks over how to deal with the student unrest, hoped that the movement would die off of its own accord subsequently. Moreover, decisive suppressive action was all but impossible while representatives of the Asian Development Bank were in Beijing, and before the international media swarmed into the capital for[page 51] Gorbachev’s visit.

Whatever the government and Party leaders may have thought, their inaction in this early phase left the people and the students with the impression that popular action and a show of numbers could in fact bring about positive, albeit grudging, change.

When Zhao Ziyang returned from North Korea, he reportedly criticized the harsh April 26th editorial. In his speech to the Asian Development Bank representatives, Zhao expressed confidence in the future and a more conciliatory attitude toward the demonstrations. On the same day, after the government had rejected the students’ proposed terms for dialogue, and in commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the May Fourth Movement, students in the tens of thousands took to the streets again. The Party and government surely saw the fewer numbers on May 4th, and the decision of a majority of students to return to classes the next day, as the beginning of the “fizzling-out” of unrest.

Journalists were confused and emboldened by the changing and con-tradictory official line. Some journalists became outspoken critics of press censorship, calling for reform and liberalization for the media.25 The search for effective means of voicing these concerns led to a huge bicycle demonstration in Beijing on May 10th, and proposals on campuses for a hunger strike. After repeated government refusal to hold talks with the new student organizations, which were officially denounced as illegal, several hundred students began a hunger strike on Tiananmen Square. The third phase of the pro-democracy movement, that of the week-long hunger strike, began.

The hunger strikers called on the government to refute the editorial, recognize the student organizations as legal, and affirm publically that the student movement was patriotic, not counterrevolutionary. The students were not so naive as to assume that softer rhetoric, without any concession on these critical points, would prevent a crackdown on activist students before long. It took equal naivete and audacity, however, to think that the leadership might actually grant the student organizations legality,for “had this demand been granted, the students would have achieved the legalization of the first completely independent political organization in PRC history.”26 Not surprisingly, preliminary talks collapsed.

The strikers’ numbers grew to two or three thousand, some students refusing water as well as food. Gorbachev’s schedule had to be changed many times to avoid the square and the massive daily demonstrations of people, a million strong and spanning the entire social spectrum, including[page 52] government organs and Party members, showing concern and support for the hunger strikers. Press coverage, unprecedentedly open and sympathetic, brought the colorful moving spectacle to Chinese throughout the country.

Although some campuses, such as Nanjing University where I was studying, had been involved in the movement from the beginning, it was during this third phase, the Beijing hunger strike, that the movement really spread nationwide. Nanjing was almost never even mentioned in the national or international press, but there were huge demonstrations with participants numbering in the tens of thousands, including workers as well as college students. A few students even joined in a sympathetic hunger strike, and over a hundred began a march on foot to the capital, but before either got very far, the situation in Beijing took a dramatic turn for the worse.

On May 18th, Li Peng and other officials had met with representatives of the hunger striking students, including Wuerkaixi and Wangdan. The proceedings were televised live, according to the students’ wishes. Although very obviously physically exhausted, the students energy, commitment, and palpable personal sacrifice for their vision of a better future for China came across as a moral victory over the government. Wuerkaixi’s eloquence under pressure clearly outshown the staid officials opposite him, even though nurses at one point rushed to revive the student leader with oxygen. In contrast, not only were Li Peng’s words abrupt, but his delivery was at times almost comic. In one long pause it seemed evident he had lost his train of thought. He ended by asking the students to convey his sincere regards to the hunger strikers, except that he said it like a growling lion, as if he were announcing the students’ execution instead.

As it turned out, he was simply practicing for the special meeting the next night when the he announced the declaration of martial law for ‘‘parts of Beijing.” Zhao Ziyang “called in sick,” that is, sympathetic with the opposition, “sick” in the same way that Wan Li was ‘‘sick” when he returned to Shanghai and was actually detained and “convinced” to side with the hardliners.

Zhao Ziyang, earlier one of the targets of the student drive against corruption, by now was a virtual hero of the protesters. His isolation from the hardliners was becoming more obvious. In his meeting with Gorbachev earlier that fateful week, he revealed the state secret of a 1987 agreement to defer to Deng Xiaoping on all policy decisions. As commentators later pointed out, he was “publicly washing his hands of everything that had gone wrong in China for the past few years.”27

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Early Friday morning May 19th, Zhao visited students on the square. The General Secretary spoke to the hunger strikers in a somewhat broken voice, clearly moved by the students’ conditions and probably also by knowledge of his own downfall. He started by apologizing, “I came too late.” Students replied, “At least you came at all.” Zhao said he hoped they would live to see and to create China’s future—for “I am already without effect” (wo yi wusuowei).28 Other than these few phrases,his speech was not too different from the official line at the time, and since the internal power struggle was as yet unknown to most, general reaction to his speech was mixed. Some of my Chinese colleagues found it disgraceful that the hunger strikers mobbed Zhao asking for his autograph on shoes, pampnlets, and scraps of clothing.

When martial law was declared in Zhao’s absence, it was clearer that he had been essentially purged. By May 19, Deng Xiaoping had the crucial military power benind his hardline position, but it had not come without some effort.29 The indecision within the military and key leadership concerning a crackdown led to the tense, uncertain, yet hopeful dragging on of the fourth stage of the movement, May 19 through June 3-when Beijing was under declared but unenforced martial law.

On the morning of May 20th, it gradually became apparent that Beijing-resident “people power” had stopped the troops on the outskirts of the capital. Chinese news reports were quite remarkable, with the hardline juxtaposed to sympathetic coverage of the movement. That Sunday’s evening news contained a critical sign of hope; prominently reported was a speech by Hungarian Prime Minister Miklos Nemeth emphasizing that the most despicable part of authoritarian rule was the use of the military to settle internal political struggles.30

Despite marital law, on Tuesday May 30th Beijing saw a demonstration of a million strong calling for the lifting of martial law and removal of the hated Premier Li Peng. As the days drew on, however, reports from the capital emphasized that order had been restored to the city.31 The people disassembled road blocks, and students joined policemen in directing traffic. There was essentially no crime, unusual for such a large city; even criminals feared citizen wrath, knowing that any excuse would be used to call the situation “chaotic” and to justify enforcing martial law.

The People’s Daily, the official Party-run newspaper, published an article about how Beijing residents’ public values had returned. People were polite to each other, understanding and helpful despite the many traffic inconveniences; store clerks served people politely in a city infam-[page 54]  ous for its horrible service attitudes. Peasants selling vegetables in free markets did not raise prices despite unprecedented demand, simply because, as one peasant said, “At such a time, everyone must have a conscience.” One elderly lady declared: “Troops will enter the city over my dead body!”32

One of the great ironies of the hardline rhetoric and Chinese reality is that a “spiritual civilization” of high public morality and feeling of togetherness in struggle to better the nation, although supposedly the fruit of the realization of communism, actually was more closely approximated by the struggle against communist hardliners. Beijing in late May saw a collective spirit of decency and compassion realized through struggle for individual rights and freedoms.

Days passed. A full week passed. Almost two. The demonstrations against martial law and open calls for the resignations of Li Peng, Yang Shangkun and Deng Xiaoping himself, dissipated into a tense “normalcy.” Although no one was sure what was happening in the leadership, it was obvious that an internal power struggle had taken the limelight from the students on the square—and then the whole nation was left in the dark.

Such strong tension could not continue indefinitely, and despite cynicism and realistic misgivings to the contrary, young Chinese intellectuals were willing to hope that, as Li Peng had said May 25th when he finally did reappear on national TV, the troops had not reached their destinations because “the People’s Army loves the People.”33 “Love” ironic words!

The large number of out-of-town students who had gone to Bejing to join in the protests reportedly exacerbated the food supply problem in Beijing, but it was undoubtedly more strained by the huge contingent of troops ringing the city who tearfully accepted food and water from the residents blocking their entry, since the troops had no food or water with them. Logistics later straightened out; the martial law troops encamped on the outskirts of Beijing received daily news coverage for putting up with innumerable hardships and helping the people. The government and Party wrote letters of regard; officials visited them; singers entertained them; and schoolchildren gave their red scarves to the “Uncle People’s Liberation Army soldiers.”

On May 27th, Li Tieying gave a televised speech commemorating the anniversary of the International Red Cross and calling upon all nations to uphold international laws of humanitarianism as China does.34 Such bitterly ironic words.!

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Meanwhile, as the student numbers on Tiananmen Square dwindled, thirty students at Beijing’s Central Academy of the Arts were hard at work—nonstop for three days and nights—remodeling a statue of a man holding a flag with two hands into the “Goddess of Democracy.’’ Some fifty thousand Beijing residents flocked to the Square to see the statue- raising. With the symbol in place, the students could have left Tiananmen, but a minority voted to stay, so stay they did.35 Many students in other cities by this time had either returned to classes or had gone home for the rest of the semester.

On June 3, the noon news prominently featured a report by the Beijing propaganda department entitled “clarify the real nature of the turmoil and the necessity for martial law.” There were some clashes between demonstrators and police involving stones and tear gas.

Hearts sank. Everyone knew from the start that the movement’s commitment to nonviolence was its safeguard against suicide.

In Beijing,a severe warning on TV admonished residents to stay indoors: if anyone ventured out, their safety could not be guaranteed. Beijing residents knew it was a declaration of war.

The brutal crackdown during the darkness between June 3rd and 4th ushered in the fifth, final,and tragic phase of the movement. Estimates place the deathtoll in the thousands. Rumors in Nanjing and elsewhere shot it up to tens of thousands. Amnesty International puts the figure at 1,000 dead in Beijing, another 300 later in Chengdu.

Why should this be “phase five”? Was it not simply the tragic end of the movement? Yes and no. Despite the slaughter which continued with random military fire in Beijing the next few days, protest continued. There was suicidal defiance in Beijing. Violence broke out in Chengdu. Reports of demonstrations came from all parts of the country, except the already well-repressed minority areas. In Nanjing, numerous demonstra- tions of hundreds and thousands of people in mourning, many wearing white shirts and black arm bands, carried hand-made wreaths to the central square near our school. Funeral music announced the solemn marchers as they went by. Angry slogans of defiance appeared on walls and at the railway station. They accused military strongman Yang Shang- kun of trying to become emperor, and they urged people to defy the murderous Li-Yang-Deng triumvirate. There were ominous rumors of civil war.36

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AFTERMATH

The massacre in central Beijing, brought home to people around the globe by graphic media coverage, shocked the world. Executions of so-called ‘‘ruffians” in the next few weeks kept the revulsion center stage. Western powers and even Japan imposed sanctions on the PRC.

China denounced the international “anti-China wave.” Authorities moved swiftly to round up the movement’s leaders, with thousands of arrests. They published and televised a list complete with detailed descriptions of the twenty-one most wanted student leaders. National television waves filled with hour-long, on-the-hour “news” recounting the official version of events: unprovoked attacks by armed civilian ruffians on highly restrained, self-sacrificing and patriotic soldiers, many of whom were savagely beaten and burned to death.

Leaders not seen for weeks or longer reappeared as they visited the martial law troops one-by-one, day-after-day—all but Zhao Ziyang, of course, whose “mistakes” received much of the blame for the whole “counterrevolutionary rebellion.” Deng Xiaoping himself made a definitive speech on June 9th, praising the troops and defying rumors that he was deathly ill or already deceased: Thank goodness this counterrevolutionary revolt occurred while we veteran revolutionaries were still around to recognize its essence and take correct, decisive action. If one reads closely, one can see in Deng’s speech an almost silent plea not to blame the Open Door and economic reforms themselves for the turmoil.37

In truth, Deng sacrificed much more in early June than what he reportedly termed “a little blood. “38 Yet, as cruel a human calculation as it may seem, the fact remains that the number killed in the massacre was miniscule compared with China’s population, and civil war would have been a much worse fate. Stability, despite all its abuse by the tyrants of the world, still has its virtues.

As a friend working for CNN in Beijing commented, many Chinese, especially the older generation, took the crackdown much as if it were a natural disaster. Many have befallen China, with a great toll in human suffering; but for most, life goes on, and one looks out for one’s own. As professor Roderick MacFarquhar of Harvard has noted, ‘‘During the past forty years, the CCP has visited far greater disasters upon its long-suffering people: the campaigns of the early 1950s resulted in at least 800,000 executions; the Great Leap Forward caused up to 28 million deaths; the Cultural Revolution, perhaps another half million. By those standards,[page 57] the Tiananmen Massacre may seem a minor mishap, but it was the first time that the regime turned its guns on peacefully demonstrating people in Beijing with the world and the rest of China looking on.”39

Now the Party is moving to patch up its shredded image by reforming from the inside, as is Deng’s wont: never admit room for opposition to Party policy, always reform the Party from the inside.40 The Party’s efforts to regain legitimacy include a highly-touted anti-corruption campaign, moves to close the wide gaps in income distribution, cutting inflation and trying to convince the people and the world, especially for the 40th anniversary of the PRC, that the situation has never been better.

Many of those they are trying to convince know better.

The PRC economy, whose poor shape was one of the prime factors unleashing the unrest in the first place, has not improved. Economic costs of the political unrest itself were in the billions of dollars. Estimates are that China lost one billion US dollars in lost man-hours and damaged property, and continued losses due to worker resentment have cut into productivity. China lost another estimated one billion dollars in precious foreign exchange as a result of virtually non-existent tourism after the crackdown.41

The effect of China’s instability on the international business community is far-reaching. Previous investments will continue to operate, but myriad new investments have been cancelled or postponed. The Wall Street Journal, for example, quotes one Western trade official as saying that of five Fortune 500 companies that had planned a total of $650 million in new China operations, all but one have cancelled42

In addition, government and aid groups have restricted loans. Com- merical banks have tightened credit. A five-fold increase in the trade deficit in the first half of 1989,a growing foreign debt, large-scale unemployment, and acute shortages of energy and raw materials plague the Chinese economy. Agriculture, once Deng Xiaoping’s success story, has hit hard times as well. Workers’ motivation is at an all-time low. Nevertheless, stability and the rhetorical lifting of martial law have persuaded some to lift sanctions. A good harvest has somewhat ameliorated the agricultural malaise, and Chinese people, disgusted with politics, have turned with renewed vigor to making money. As a whole, however, with the Party and government preoccupied with political problems, and the economy in the hands of old, disproven economists, China’s economic problems are quite daunting.43

Politically, Ted Koppel has said, “If China was normal during the[page 58] Cultural Revolution, then China is back to normal.”44 Actually, Chinese and Westerners alike make many references and comparisons to the Cultural Revolution without a very thorough knowledge of what they mean. Deng Xiaoping himself compared the student unrest to the Cultural Revolution, but as Dr. MacFarquhar has pointed out, “Tiananmen Square of 1989 was virtually the mirror image of Tiananmen Square of 1966.”45 What really does resemble the Cultural Revolution, however, is the government propaganda, starting with the April 26th editorial.

Last May one of my Chinese term papers was a comparison of the two “authentic versions” of the 1976 Tiananmen Incident, i.e., the Gang of Four’s vilification of the uprising immediately following in Spring 1976 and the reaffirmation of the righteous “revolutionary uprising” by Deng Xiaoping when he regained power in 1978. The 1989 Chinese hardline propaganda eerily revives many of the techniques that the Gang of Four employed. Both, for example, feature a pre-defined verdict of the movement as counterrevolutionary and the accusation that the dissenters were destroying ten years of hard-won progress; in 1976,ten years of the revolutionary egalitarianism of the Cultural Revolution; in 1989,ten years of economic reform and the open-door policy. Both Gang of Four and post- June 4th Chinese propaganda resort to blatant rewriting of history and dwelling upon loopholes, such as the “completely peaceful” clearing of the square itself. Salient in both is the incredible irony of rhetoric typifying the oppressive force as righteously indignant and self-sacrincing, values properly attributed to the now-silenced victims of suppression. As in the Cultural Revolution, recent propaganda has glorified the supreme leader and castigated the “top capitalist roader in the Party” —to use Cultural Revolution terminology not far removed from 1989 propaganda— or “bourgeois-liberalist’’ Zhao Ziyang. The former Party General Secretary now goes the way of five previous heir-apparents in PRC history: official ignominy as an anti-Party conspirator, or at least as one who committed “serious mistakes.”

Foreign newspapers were seized, the Voice of America jammed, foreign satelites cut off, and “evil influences from the West” criticized in the arts. Official books and a video tape blasting the “counterrevolutionary revolt” appeared, including a new tape of old songs popular during the Cultural Revolution such as “Socialism is Good,” Without the Communist Party There Would Be No New China,” and “Party, Beloved Mother.”46 Talk of class struggle has even resurfaced.47 The PRC’s system of justice has been abused and ignored, as the People’s High Court [page 59] instructs lower courts not be slowed and distracted by “details’’ in prosecuting the “counterrevolutionary traitors,”48

The educational system is once again prey to ideological cheapening. College admissions have been cut drastically, especially for schools most active in last spring’s movement. No new students can enroll in graduate programs in philosophy, history, international politics, or public administration. Students are to receive from a few weeks to a full year of military training for freshmen at Beida. Graduate students must first labor in a factory or in the countryside a year or two before continuing their education.49 In early June, it was even announced on the 6:30 am news that ideological education was too lax at the kindergaren level!

What will the future bring? If the exciting and then tragic events of April, May and June teach us anything, it is that the future is largely unpredictable. Although professional cynics would have us believe that they predicted June’s disaster from day one, they fool nobody. No one—not the so-called experts, not the Chinese people, not the highest Chinese leadership—no one knew exactly how events would unfold. Because the future is so critical and intriguing, however, everyone tries to predict it anyway. In conclusion, therefore, I would like to posit a few “certainties”:

Most obviously, Deng will die. He reportedly has already had surgery for prostate cancer and is taking strong pain-killing drugs. Post-Deng PRC politics are far from clean Secondly, the facts of the 1989 movement and crackdown will probably never all be known, for history always has been rewritten by the victorious. Thirdly, one of if not the critical factor in Chinese politics for years to come will be who commands the loyalty, or which loyalties, of the military. Finally, the student movement will come again, and there will be a re-reckoning of the June 4th massacre. This is perhaps my most dangerous prediction, since it is also my fervent hope and conviction.

The potential for further unrest is not to be underestimated. The persistence of thinly-veiled hatred and ridicule of the current PRC regime, by no means restricted to intellectuals, can nevertheless be illustrated by recent political humor circulated among educated youth in Beijing. According to one joke, a convicted “counterrevolutionary” questions his prosecutor as to why he received a fifteen-year prison sentence whereas all the others are to be imprisoned only ten years. The prosecutor tells him that he had divulged a very sensitive state secret. What secret was it? “Li Peng is a pig.”

A second pointed joke is set in an airplane about to run out of fuel. [page 60] The situation becomes even more serious for the five people on board—President Bush, Deng Xiaoping, Zhao Ziyang, and two crew members— when they discover that there are only four parachutes on board. One crafty crew member announces that he will demonstrate for them how to use a parachute; he then quickly jumps to safety. President Bush, declaring that he is the leader of the United States, indeed of the whole free world, grabs the second parachute and makes good an escape. Deng Xiaoping then anxiously declares that since he too is a very important leader and China cannot do without him, he must also parachute to safety; he hastily grabs one and jumps. Two are left in the doomed plane. Zhao Ziyang turns to the young crew member and magnanimously offers to give him the last remaining parachute.

At this juncture, the joke’s narrator departs from standard mandarin to render his or her best imitation of Zhao’s thick accent, mimicking the exact tone and words that Zhao used to address the hunger strikers on Tiananmen Square the day before martial law: “I am old, without effect (wu suo wei). You are young...”

When the crew member, extremely moved by Zhao’s generosity, goes to put on the last prachute, however, he discovers that there are actually two left. Deng Xiaoping, in his haste, had grabbed a backpack instead of a parachute.50

Dr. MacFarquhar writes that “for the first time, it appears more likely than not that the Communist regime will not long outlive its first generation. In the long trajectory of Chinese history, the PRC is beginning to look like one of the great founding dynasties which have left indelible marks upon the polity, but imposed such terrible hardships on the Chinese people that they were tolerated only for a few decades.” 51 Perhaps. There are many who hope so.52

**NOTES:**

1. Author’s translation from the Chinese in Jiushi Niandai (The Nineties), Hong Kong: Going Fine Ltd., 16 June, 1989: 8.

2.The author gratefully acknowledges the support of a Dartmouth Reynolds Scholarship to study at the Hopkins-Nanjing Center in Nanjing 1988-89 and a Fulbright Grant to study in Seoul 1989-90. She also would like to thank the Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch for sponsoring this paper, presented in Seoul on 11 October 1989. The chronology of the spring events described herein is based upon the author’s experiences in the PRC and her contact with young Chinese intellectuals who were both involved in and perceptive[page 61] observers of the pro-democracy movement. For the sake of Chinese friends, professors, classmates, and relatives, all personal sources remain anonymous.

3. Chow Tse-tung, The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China,Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960: II.

4. The historical background of Chinese student-led popular movements which follows draws heavily upon the author’s Comparative Historical Analysis of Twentieth Century Student Activism in China and Korea. Asian Studies Honors Thesis, Dartmouth College, June 1988.

5. Andrew J. Nathan, Chinese Democracy. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1985: 44-45.

6. Eggleston, Comparative Historical Analysis: 7.

7. John Israel, Student Nationalism in China 1927-1937. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966: 120.

8. Quoted on the Ted Koppel TV special ‘‘Tragedy at Tiananmen: The Untold Story” hereafter “Tragedy at Tiananmen”).

9. For more on worker participation in the protest movement, see Merle Golaman ‘‘Vengeance in China.” The New York Review of Books, 9 November 1989: 5-9; and Andrew G. Walder, ‘‘The Political Sociology of the Beijing Upheaval of 1989,” Problems of Communism, September-October 1989: 30-40.

10. For a similar view of the protesters’ motives and ideals, as well as an excellent analysis of the factors shaping this remonstrative moderation, see Andrew J. Nathan, “Chinese Democracy in 1989: Continuity and Change,” Problems in Communism, September-October 1989: 16-29. Nathan concludes that ‘‘if the exercise of free speech that is guaranteed by the Chinese constitution is illegal, then the students and intellectuals denounced by [Beijing mayor] Chen Xitong did commit subversion. But the democrats continue to see their relation to the regime differently. In the words of the biographer of China’s first remonstrator, Qu Yuan: ‘It was his fate to be faithful and yet doubted, to be loyal and yet suffer slander—can one bear this without anger?’”(p. 29).

11. ‘‘Tragedy at Tiananmen.”

12. Sarah Lubman, ‘‘Students for a Democratic Bureaucracy: Chinese Protesters Don’t Understand the System They Crave,” The Washington Post National Weekly Edition, 7-13 August 1989.

13. Ibid.

14. Both quoted in ibid.

15. Commentator on ‘‘Tragedy at Tiananmen.”

16. Beijing Party Secretary Li Ximing’s report on the development of the movement up to 20 May, quoted in Guang Jiao Jing (“Wide Angle”), Hong Kong, 16 June 1989: 94-98. Concerning the efforts to assist the hunger-striking students, see pp. 96-97. According to the report, along with the efforts of the Red Cross and various official departments, the Beijing Military District contributed one thousand cotton quilts to keep the hunger strikers ‘‘cool in the day and warm at night.” All of these things, he concludes, show that ‘‘the Party, the government, and the whole society showed great solicitude for, took good care of, and adopted a responsible attitude towards the hunger striking students” (p. 97).

17. In the following account of the movement, I present a ‘‘students’-eye-view” of the unfolding events. For analyses of the intellectual antecedents of the movement and the elite[page 62] politics of Party disunity, see, for example, ‘‘Tiananmen 1989: A Symposium,’’ Problems of Communism, September-October 1989: 2-48.

18. Author’s conversation with Beijing students, 22 April 1989.

19. Quoted in “Tragedy at Tiananmen.”

20. Renmin Erbao (The People’s Daily), 26 April 1989: 1.

21. Yao Wenyuan, the infamous propagandist of the Gang of Four.

22. As translated by Perry Link in ‘‘The Chinese Intellectuals and the Revolt,” The New York Review of Books, 29 June 1989: 36.

23. According to an estimate in “Beijing Spring,” TIME, 8 May 1989: 36.

24. ‘‘Tragedy at Tiananmen.”

25. For more on the role of the media in the protests, see Walder, ‘‘The Political Sociology’’ (note 9), pp. 38-39.

26. Nathan, ‘‘Chinese Democracy in 1989,” 25.

27. “Tragedy at Tiananmen.’’

28. Chinese Central TV news, 19 May 1989.

29. For an analysis of the PLA’s role in the crisis, see June Teufel Dreyer, ‘‘The People’s Liberation Army and the Power Struggle of 1989,” Problems of Communism, September-October 1989: 41-48.

30. Chinese Central TV News, 21 May 1989.

31. See Renmin Erbao, ‘‘Beijing jieyan di yi tian” (The first day of Beijing martial law, through the ninth day), 20-29 May 1989: 1.

32. Luo Pan and Qin Shuwen, “4Dangjin Beijingrende gongde yishi” (The current public morality consciousness of Beijingers). Renmin Erbao, 24 May 1989: 4.

33. Li Peng, in a meeting with three ambassadors newly accredited to Beijing, said that martial law troops had not reached their destinations in Beijing not because the troops “lack this ability,” but ‘‘because our government is the people’s government, our army is the people’s own army.” In the same newscast, Premier Li Peng remarked that jieyan, what was declared for ‘‘parts of Beijing,” was distinct from junguan, ‘‘rule by the military.” even though their English translation is identical: martial law. Thereafter, many young Chinese intellectuals ridiculed Li Peng’s ‘‘linguistic brilliance” along with his ‘‘skills of oratory.” Also, in the same newscast, an official from the Foreign Ministry made the point that his ministry, as part of the government, was ready to help the new ambassadors, thus publicly refuting the widespread if rather incredible rumor that the Foreign Ministry had declared itself independent of the Li Peng government. (Author’s transcriptions of CCTV news, 25 May 1989).

34. Eleventh item on the CCTV evening news, 27 May 1989 (author’s notes).

35. ‘‘Tragedy at Tiananmen,” and other media and personal accounts.

36. Despite the swift crackdown on student and worker activists, it nevertheless took the government over two weeks before they declared all exit permits issued before the crackdown invalid. Two days before they did so, my Chinese husband and I left Beijing.

37. See Renmin Erbao, 10 June 1989: 1. For an English translation, see Lawrence R. Sullivan, “Documentation: The Chinese Democracy Movement of 1989,” Orbis, Fall 1989: 580-583. According to this version, for example, Deng says “Perhaps this bad thing will enable us to go ahead with reform and the open-door policy with a more steady and better—even a faster—pace” (p. 581).

[page 63] 38.Quoted in ‘‘Tragedy at Tiananmen.”

39. ‘‘The End of the Chinese Revolution,” The New York Review of Books, 20 July 1989: 10.

40. See Uli Franz, Deng Xiaoping (trans. Tom Artin) Boston: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1988.

41. ‘‘Beijing’s Economic Ills Pose a New Threat of Social Upheaval,” Wall Street Journal, 3 August 1989: 1.

42. Ibid.

43. For analyses of the stagnating PRC economy and the recent CCP policy reversion to strict central planning, see Roger Sullivan, ‘‘China Marches Toward Stagnation,” Asian Wall Street Journal 3-4 November 1989; Louise De Rosario, ‘‘Three Years of Hard Labour,” Far Eastern Economic review 30 November 1989: 68-69; and Robert Delfs, ‘‘Power to the Party,” ibid, 7 December 1989: 23-25.

44.”Tragedy at Tiananmen.”

45. ‘‘The End of the Chinese Revolution” 8.

46. “Foreign Newspapers Seized in Beijing,” San Francisco Chronicle 15 July 1989: A10.

47. In his speech commemorating the PRC’s 40th anniversary, new Party General Secretary Jiang Zemin spoke of the “serious class struggle’’ needed to defeat bourgeois liberalization; see “Jiang Zemin tongzhide jianghua” (Comrade Jiang Zemin’s Speech), Guangming Erbao (Guangming Daily), 30 September 1989: 1.

48. ‘‘How China’s Legal System Works, San Francisco Chronicle 23 June 1989: A23.

49. ‘‘China is Planning 2 Years of Labor for its Graduates,” New York Times 13 August 1989: I.

50. Author’s conversations in Beijing, January-February 1990.

51. ‘‘The End of the Chinese Revolution” 10.

52. Since the presentation of this paper, the startling events in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union have served to underscore, for those reflecting upon “Beijing Spring,” that the choice of dialogue versus crackdown is a conscious decision, that what the Chinese students struggled for—anti-corruption, press freedom, the right to assemble, even the resignation of all the top leaders and political as well as continued economic reform—was not as unthinkable as it may have seemed not so long ago. Of course any direct comparisons are suspect for overlooking fundamental differences between countries and regions. Nevertheless, it seems to be accepted that the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe were somehow ‘‘inevitable” since mass demonstrations left the ruling leaders with ‘‘no choice” but to relent, resign, reform. Was the PRC ‘‘inevitably” doomed to darkness? If the choice of the CCP senile-ocracy, through power of reverse example, helped to tip the scales in Eastern Europe toward dialogue instead of crackdown, then perhaps something good has come of China’s tragedy. And perhaps for China, horror can give way to, even itself spawn, new hope. As a Chinese proverb says, ‘‘The darkest part of the night is just before dawn.”