

Introduction

Any important event, movement, or set of ideas must have a standard appellation in China. Sloganizing and repetition of set rhetorical formulas is raised to an art, albeit one that sometimes deadens thought. "Turmoil" was the Chinese government's label for the six weeks of student protest between mid-April and early June 1989. The news readers on China Central Television's English service pronounced it with an emphasis on the second syllable, and it figured in every official speech. The now infamous *People's Daily* editorial of April 26 provided this label and simultaneously fanned the movement's flames by insulting the students and threatening government suppression. Li Peng cited turmoil as a key reason for the declaration of martial law. "Turmoil" is an accepted translation for *dongluan*, "to make chaos." Chaos is a perennial fear in China, and the authorities hoped to play on this. The students, however, preferred the label *luandong*, which refers to free-form dancing, the sort of individually creative movement popularized in the West during the 1960s. Beijing students liked the syllabic reversal; they were dancing in spontaneous order, they said, not making chaos.

When former Communist Party general secretary Hu Yaobang, a reformer, died on April 15, it took only hours for students to fill the streets around their campuses and cover the walls with posters. Within two days, marchers had giant photographs of Hu to carry, indicating that there was organization behind the protests. Indeed, activists had been planning demonstrations to coincide with the seventieth anniversary of the May Fourth student movement and simply moved the date up. Student leaders had connections to older reformers and businesspeople who could supply the photographs. They had networks of communication among themselves. How-

ever, this organizational basis for protest was not equivalent to a top-down, hierarchical command structure, a formal organization. The broad mass of students were not manipulated by a handful, nor did outside agitators constitute a "black hand" behind the protests; no neat line can be drawn between those who were "inside" or "outside" the organization. Leadership was diffuse and contested, planning informal and rooted in custom—for example, in the common knowledge of where to look for wall posters carrying information or opinion, or in the habitual role of class monitors as leaders. A central theme of this book is that fluid, ambiguous organization gave shape and strength to the student movement. I will try to show that the movement was less the product of central planning than some retrospective constructions—of student leaders as well as government critics—suggest. I will emphasize both the multiplicity of forms of leadership and organization and the extent to which the movement reflected a broader discourse, a wider set of responses to social change and ambitions for China's future.

The movement also had deep roots in Chinese traditions. Students echoed and played with old slogans, protest themes, and national concerns, and these took on new power in a period of cultural crisis. This historical resonance and the movement's relatively open form enabled it to bring in large numbers of workers, officials, and ordinary people—the "old hundred names" (*laobaixing*) of Beijing and dozens of other cities. Such openness also allowed for shifts from one set of issues and identities to another, as a movement specifically of students became increasingly a movement of (or at least on behalf of) the Chinese people as a whole. Ultimately, though, the loose organizational framework and the contests among different leaders and groups of students inhibited negotiations and stalled attempts to withdraw from the occupation of Tiananmen Square. The movement grew beyond its organizational capacity, leading to disorder, disputes, and petty abuses of power.

The student movement of 1989 was truly unprecedented in the People's Republic, yet it was deeply shaped by history and especially by the discourse of intellectuals. It reflected not only an emerging public sphere linked to popular culture in film, television, and other media but also an older sort of communication among elite scholars. Echoes of the past figured prominently. Students began to take to the streets in growing numbers after the death of Hu Yaobang, who had lost his post as Communist Party general secretary during the repression of the 1986–87 student protest. *Dazibao* (large character posters) mounted on the walls of Beijing University's "Triangle Area" listed key dates from previous struggles, es-

pecially the May Fourth movement of 1919, China's first major student uprising and symbol of the campaign for New Culture. The seventieth anniversary of the May Fourth protests was the occasion of the second really large march of 1989. That year was also the tenth anniversary of the Democracy Wall movement, which had brought the first massive voice for democratization in post-Mao China.

These and many other anniversaries were a topic of intellectual discussion well before the protest. In an article written early in 1989 and featured in the May issue of Shanghai's *Wenhui Bao*, the prominent writer Su Xiaokang predicted:

The year 1989 is destined to be a singular memorial year which meets many historical giants: It is the bicentenary of the French revolution; the centenary of the founding of the Second International; the 70th anniversary of the May 4th movement; the 40th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China; the 30th anniversary of the Lushan Conference; the 20th anniversary of the death of Liu Shaoqi; and so on. No one can escape these coming days of the year which may make you happy or unhappy one way or the other.¹

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On May 3, I sat with a handful of graduate students on the Beijing University campus. They stressed the many round-numbered anniversaries repeatedly as they sought to make sense of their movement, which already was beginning to make them feel part of a historical struggle. They cited many of the dates on Su's list, with May 4 the Chinese date that impressed them most. None of them brought up 1949, the year of the communist revolution, so I did. "Yes," said one with little enthusiasm, "but also 1789, the year of the French Revolution and the signing of the U.S. Constitution."²

The very scene of this conversation said something about the background to the protest. Of all Chinese universities, Beijing University is perhaps the one that feels most familiar to an American. Its campus was originally that of Yenching University, focus of Harvard's Beijing outreach effort, and it is laid out with quadrangles, spacious lawns, rolling hills, and a pretty lake. No American would need more than a moment to recognize it as a university campus. And in 1989 it looked more familiar than ever. Snazzy ten-speed bicycles were cropping up among the more traditional, utilitarian Chinese designs. Students wore polo shirts with brand-name logos splashed across their chests. Men and women walked hand in hand. One could buy Coke as well as the local orange sodas. A good number of students had earphones on their heads and Walkman stereos at their belts. Oddly, one of the things that struck me as most un-

familiar was the very high percentage of students who smoked cigarettes—even though many favored brands from my home state of North Carolina.

Chinese students in 1989 partook of international culture, not only through the sale and consumption of various commodities but also through the mass media, which were making their way increasingly into China. This international culture also had an intellectual side. Students and their teachers were as keen to catch up on the latest trends in Western social theory or literary criticism as Chinese army officers were eager to learn about state-of-the-art computers and weaponry. Habermas, Derrida, and Jameson were all popular to cite, even if only fragments of their writings had been read.

At the same time that icons of Western culture were being imported, key symbols of China's recent past were under attack. Beijing University had previously been home to one of my favorite statues of Mao Zedong. In front of a central building he had stood, his hands clasped behind his back, facing into the wind, perhaps the wind of change. Though Mao was already dead when I first visited Beijing University, it hadn't occurred to me that this statue might be toppled by the time I returned. At worst, I imagined, Mao would simply lose his currency, but I was sure his statue would remain a landmark—a bit like the Confederate soldier on the front quad of my own campus in Chapel Hill. Yet Mao's statue became a casualty of shifting political currents and a deep-seated ambivalence on the part of young Chinese intellectuals toward their past.

In addition to recent symbols such as Mao, ancient figures of Chinese culture were subject to attack. Students grappled with the challenge of figuring out what it did and should mean to be Chinese even as they accepted certain Western influences and proposed innovations of their own. They had not lost their pride in being Chinese, but this pride was coupled, paradoxically, with a humiliation at whatever seemed to have made China weak in the modern world.

Among the bits of Western influence at work in China were partial stirrings of capitalism. When I gathered with my student friends to talk about the prospects for democracy, it was in a privately owned and operated restaurant housed on the Beijing University campus. And though there was talk of inflation as a public issue, this restaurant drew praise for providing us with more good food than we could eat—and quite enough beer to drink—for the equivalent of a little over a dollar a head. Even that was an expensive meal for Chinese students, who would ordinarily pay fifty cents or less to eat at the dining hall (carrying their own metal dishes with them

and using a spoon rather than chopsticks because it would do for soup and other dishes and because it wouldn't fall through a mesh bag).

Around the table, my new friends praised my handling of chopsticks—a routine sort of compliment for the Chinese to pay a foreigner. They deferentially asked my opinion of and advice for the Chinese student movement. And gradually, after a little prodding, they began to tell me more of what they thought lay ahead. Some expected real democracy in a year or so; others wondered whether they would see it in their lifetime. All thought it inevitable, a matter of historical necessity and popular will. They told me that intellectuals had a central role to play as the conscience of the nation and as the source of a new vision of Chinese culture.³ They relived inspiring moments from the April 27 march, in which students had broken through ranks of unarmed military police to reach Tiananmen Square, revealing the government's unwillingness to enforce the threats of violent repression it had made the day before. My dining companions speculated on tactical questions: Should the planned May 4 march be the last before a consolidation of gains or one moment in a rising wave of protest? Would the return of Zhao Ziyang from North Korea bring them an important friend in power or end the government's apparent indecision about how to stop the movement? How could the ideas of the students best be spread to other sections of the population? They argued among themselves over such questions and joked about the danger of repression, laughing at the undergraduates who had made out wills before marching on Tiananmen against government orders.

Within six weeks, these students would experience peaks of exhilaration as their movement grew beyond their short-term expectations, troughs of depression as it seemed to falter from ineffective leadership and lack of direction, and rage as soldiers following government orders killed hundreds or even thousands of protesters. By mid-June, some of these students would flee Beijing to the relative safety of family and friends in smaller towns. Others would attend hours of "political study" sessions each week, confessing the number of times they had joined demonstrations, resisting calls to inform on friends, studying the speeches of Deng Xiaoping and Li Peng. All except one (who succeeded in leaving China) would have been silenced, at least for the near future.

Yet they readjusted rapidly. Still bitter at their situation and at China's political silence, they nonetheless embraced the return of calm and the recovery of the economy. With the field of possibilities changing, they shifted the focus of their national and personal aspirations alike. Most again embraced the cause of economic reform and found themselves hoping

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their erstwhile enemy Deng Xiaoping would outlive the more conservative octogenarians with whom he shared power.

I next returned to Beijing three years after the massacre. The streets were the same, but not the crowds. Though three years is a short time as history—especially Chinese history—goes, it was long enough for the movement to become a matter of history, despite hopes and real possibilities for its resurrection. The return to Beijing of movement leader Shen Tong in the summer of 1992 did cause a stir, and without too much effort he was able to provide the Chinese government with a pretext on which to arrest him, despite its own assurances of safety for returning students and exiles. The winds could shift direction in an instant, I had no doubt, but the winds of 1992 were not blowing the way of 1989. When Wang Dan—perhaps the single most important student leader and the only key activist apprehended by the regime—was released from prison early in 1993, it hardly caused a sensation. The populace of Beijing was worried mainly about how to make money. University professors complained that students wanted only to find connections that could bring jobs in joint-venture companies, that they weren't really interested in serious study. Wang Dan himself announced that he planned to pursue a career in business. The sense of political apathy—or rather, the sense of apolitical eagerness for continued economic reform and its real and imagined opportunities—was indeed striking. I had to remind myself that at the beginning of 1989 professors had made similar complaints that students were apathetic, that they were interested not in doing practical work in China but only in taking the TOEFL test for study in America. People always have more motives than opportunities for action, and in China especially it is important to pick one's actions carefully.

It requires now a considerable effort to recall the sense of agitation and unease about China's situation that was so immediate in 1989. To do so, it is necessary to keep in mind four major conditions that shaped the ground in which the movement grew. I introduce these only briefly here, both as background for those less familiar with China and as reminders for all of the circumstances specific to 1989.

UNDERLYING CONDITIONS (Four conditions)

I) Succession Crisis

Chinese critics of the communist regime are fond of comparing it to its imperial predecessors, pointing out what they call its "feudal" aspects. This is in many ways a problematic characterization, born largely of a crude

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appropriation of the already simplified historical categories of *The Communist Manifesto*.⁴ The particularities of traditional China are poorly grasped by comparing it with medieval Europe; moreover, feudalism was only one aspect, however important, of European social organization. The comparison is blurred further by the translation of feudalism as fengjian, a category of traditional Confucian historiography. In the last forty years this term has been used to characterize China's entire past, as though for four thousand years the society was stagnant and unchanging. But fengjian was originally intended to describe phases of relatively decentralized rural and military society in alternation with the more centrally governed, urban, and commercial junxian system.⁵ Instead of seeing Chinese history in terms of large-scale change and internal differentiation, however, many very educated Chinese see it as almost unchanging. Indeed, one of the most prominent criticisms of Chinese culture in the late 1980s was Jin Guantao's argument that it promoted a "superstable" social structure.⁶

For years, the Guomindang government in Taiwan had been fond of claiming that Mao was no more than China's latest emperor. To many in the West this had seemed both a cheap shot and an analytical error. Indeed, blaming the communist system's current difficulties on lingering feudalism was actually a criticism that parts of the government could endorse, as it challenged not official ideology or policy but only premature claims of success. Blaming feudalism only discouraged a more fundamental critique of the current regime.

Nonetheless, in 1989 the government did seem to share a good many characteristics with traditional China. For example, students pointed to the old men struggling to cling to power. Crises of succession were the bane of imperial China. Because each emperor ruled until his death, nearly every transition was marked by a power struggle; as a ruler grew old, his generals, staff, and potential heirs began jockeying for position, creating increasing instability that often culminated in a full-scale crisis after the emperor's death. In the late 1980s, Deng Xiaoping took explicit steps to avoid this pattern. He maneuvered his fellow octogenarians into full or partial retirement, elevating a "younger" generation of leaders (most in their sixties) to power. But ultimately he appeared unwilling to give up the final say on every important policy decision. His stubborn hold on power may have been necessary to avoid open factional fighting. In 1987 Deng engineered the removal of his long-time protégé and designated heir, Hu Yaobang, when the latter had acted too independently in allowing economic reform to extend into the political arena. Deng would do much the same to Zhao Ziyang in 1989. Students sometimes caricatured Deng Xiaoping not just

the naive perspective of perceiving Chinese history
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think about why it is painted this way by the communist party?
Why would be the underlying motive to do this?

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as an emperor but sometimes as the dowager Empress Cixi, who staged a coup against her own son when he took reform to lengths she found intolerable. "Socialist countries," one student placard suggested, "are republics in name only, and monarchies in reality."⁷ As a student wrote on one of my questionnaires in mid-May, "This is a life-or-death struggle between democracy and totalitarianism. We want to overthrow Deng Xiaoping because we see him as the last dictator in the centuries-long history of China. This is precisely what the present movement really focuses on!"

In addition to decrying Deng's power, students cited the average age of the party elite as itself an indication of China's failure to modernize. They felt this failure keenly, as it meant that they would have to wait decades, following the dictates of their elders rather than their hearts or minds, before they could have a substantial voice in the highest levels of policymaking. Indeed, one of the sources of Mikhail Gorbachev's popularity in China was his dissimilarity to the Chinese gerontocracy. The Soviet leader was relatively young, and he appeared to listen to and promote still younger voices. A bit of the same had happened in China, to be sure; a few younger economists and business managers had been catapulted to prominence. A Western graduate education helped some overcome the handicaps of youth and enjoy rapid career advancement. But no such person had yet moved into the ranks of central power. The role of the party elders was seen as a drag on China's progress and even as a source of embarrassment, a sign of backwardness itself. That the top party elite generally lacked formal education was also galling to intellectuals and students.

In the spring of 1989, a few people went beyond raising questions about the age of party leaders and wondering who would succeed Deng. Perhaps, they suggested, China was experiencing a succession not just of emperors but of dynasties. Perhaps the communist regime would turn out to be one of China's short-lived dynasties, a reign of decades like the Sui or Yuan rather than of a thousand years, as the traditional benediction has it. Chinese dynasties are thought to have a natural life course: strong and sometimes expanding in their youth, stable and peaceful in middle age, increasingly prone to crises and instability as they grow old. Was communism growing old?

Few students believed that short-term changes were going to end the People's Republic of China. The majority did not even contemplate overturning the Communist Party. They did, however, see the government as weakening and the succession crisis, whether large or small, as playing a significant role in this process. The ordinary work of the government

Is one person, even a ruler, that significant to the whole society?

老人政治

was hampered by poor discipline, increasing corruption, and factional struggles. The latter were waged not just between "hard-liners" and "reformers" but among a wide range of different groups. Though most such groups had ideological positions, these were not necessarily their basis. Many were constructed out of personal loyalties, including kinship, whereas others were marriages of convenience. Alliances crosscut each other, and boundaries shifted. Little of this struggle went on in public or even in full view of the party elite. Jockeying for position seemed the main preoccupation of China's rulers, who remained hidden behind the red door and statuary lions of the Zhongnanhai compound on all but the most ceremonial occasions. As such jostling consumed more and more attention, highly placed people grew increasingly uneasy and uncertain about what sort of government—and ideological line—would prevail.

The succession crisis did not cause all the divisions in government; it merely kept the regime from resolving or papering them over. Differing views of the economic reforms of the past decade; the struggles among generations and among families and cliques; relations between military and civilian leaders; debate over the extent of permissible Westernization; and attempts to stem some of the high-level corruption that ran rampant were all factors undermining government unity. Yet the widespread concern over succession caused the government's near incapacitation when faced with the growing student protest and the evident sympathy much of the broader public felt for it. The movement cannot be understood simply in terms of its own grievances or organizational strengths. It must be seen as flowering in an opening provided for it by the internal divisions and relative weakness of the government.⁸

II) *Material Gains and Their Limits*

In the spring of 1989, Chinese people frequently pointed out the various shortcomings of their economy. Inflation was growing; there were periodic shortages of important products; some goods and services could be secured only through bribery; and wages were not only low in absolute terms but also inequitable. Students repeatedly bemoaned their own poverty, which was very real by American standards, and pointed out that even the most senior professors (along with engineers, doctors, and other intellectuals and professionals) made but a fraction of a taxi driver's income.

At the same time, though the students did not always recognize it, their material situation was noticeably better than that of students only a few

years before. Bicycles were not a short-supply item, though most students had rather beat-up bikes (a couple told me they had left their fancier ten-speeds at home because they would stand out at the university and possibly be stolen). Most students at the major Beijing universities had radios, and a few had televisions in their dormitory rooms. Undergraduates were crowded four to six to a room, but nearly all ate adequately and owned a few books. Many had cameras (including some fancy Japanese models) with which to photograph their favorite *dazibao*. This was a far cry from the China of the early 1980s, when a tourist might draw stares just by changing film. Beijing students were also better off than those in most of the rest of China; they had tape recorders to play pop songs or to record speeches during the demonstrations, and protest leaders found it easy to buy battery-operated megaphones. In short, even students, who had not shared much in China's economic gains of the last decade, were noticeably better off than they had been five years before.

The gains were much more pronounced for other groups. The *getihu*, small entrepreneurs whose stalls filled markets and sidewalks, often made enough money to be well above manning their own booths anymore. Some, indeed, owned motorcycles and frequented the better restaurants. Of course, some also failed, though this side of capitalism did not yet seem apparent to all Chinese; many assumed that simply being an entrepreneur ensured prosperity. Other beneficiaries of economic reform were the employees of joint-venture companies, from hotels to textile factories to electronics assembly plants. Nearly all these workers could expect to earn a wage at least double the national average. Peasants had benefited most famously from the reforms, largely from the right to raise some animals and market some crops for themselves. The growing big business sector included some well-paid senior managers and an increasing number of millionaires. Most famous were the founders of the Stone Computer Corporation (Si Tong Company), China's largest privately owned company, which even operated its own think tank (headed by a former sociology teacher who became one of the final four hunger strikers of June 1989) and issued its own publications. Deng Xiaoping's slogan, "to get rich is glorious," had not been ignored.

Since 1987, however, many of the gains had been eroded. The economy had stagnated.⁹ Peasants had been paid for their main crops (still purchased by the government) only partly in cash; the remainder was paid in a not-immediately-negotiable scrip. Inflation had eaten up much of the extra earnings of urban workers and may even have led to a fall in real income

for the first time in the post-Mao period. Unemployment, hidden behind the euphemism "waiting for work," was growing rapidly, leaving numerous young members of the urban working class with both the time and the rationale for protest.

The juxtaposition of market prices in some areas and regulated prices in others created recurrent supply bottlenecks (though never on the scale of those in the Soviet Union). Where goods were available at both official and (higher) market prices, those who controlled products tabbed at the former always had the temptation to sell at the latter and pocket the difference. In the countryside, the rush to purchase consumer goods had reportedly slowed. The government scrip and consequent shortage of cash was not the only reason for the diminished demand. Peasants had also begun to save for traditional purposes such as weddings and funerals. In July 1989 the government would launch a crackdown on such practices, ostensibly because of their "superstitious" religious foundations but also substantially because of the economic impact of large amounts of money being held out of circulation.

Corruption and profiteering were even more problematic and even more resented, yet both proliferated. Part of the reason lay in the government's loss of control over its own cadres. Inflation exacerbated the problem: Petty officials were generally on fixed incomes, and when inflation squeezed them, they squeezed others. Such behavior likely added to the resentment ordinary people felt toward corrupt officials and the growing prevalence of bribery.¹⁰

Even though problems had accompanied the economic growth of recent years, the student and popular protest of spring 1989 cannot be understood without noting that gains were genuine. First, many of the popular complaints—most notably corruption, inflation, and inequities in income distribution—were largely products of the economic reforms. Second, the economic changes helped propel the more general opening of possibilities in China. Economic motives had helped to increase Western influences—tourism yielded hard currency, joint ventures brought in capital and technology, and education abroad developed skills. Beyond this, economic reforms had created a sense that career advancement did not depend solely on currying favor with the Communist Party or one's immediate supervisors (though there were still sharp limits to how free from one's *danwei*, or work unit, one could become).¹¹ Third, and centrally, the very economic ambitions of the Party and government made them newly reliant on highly educated workers, professionals, scientists, and scholars.

III. A Renewed Prominence for Intellectuals

A very wide range of educated people is categorized by the Chinese term *zhishifenzi*, translated as "intellectuals." In China, all who have a university education and many with technical training are considered intellectuals, not just those who create, criticize, or disseminate knowledge. Deng Xiaoping and other proponents of economic modernization realized they needed such people. [This realization had to contend, however, with the ambivalence the leadership of the Communist Party, and for that matter the people of China, had always shown toward intellectuals.¹²]

Intellectuals were respected in traditional China as masters of Confucian thought, calligraphy, and classical Chinese style. At the same time, though, they were resented as a dominant, often oppressive elite tied to the imperial bureaucracy. Westernization perpetuated this ambivalence. Intellectual ranks grew, but the role some played as purveyors of Western culture made others uneasy. The struggle to respond to the challenge of Western economic and military power helped to generate reform-oriented intellectual movements. However, the official intellectuals of the imperial bureaucracy by and large proved themselves inadequate to the challenge of reforming their own administration and strengthening China. Far too many remained arrogantly aloof from the needs of ordinary people, the corruption of the late Qing dynasty, and the general crisis of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. [During the republican era (1911–1949), intellectual life was invigorated by the development of a public sphere and field of discourse separate from the state administration.] Intellectuals attempted to reach out to less educated people and reconsidered their own leading role in China.¹³ But despite the reform efforts of the New Culture movement, and despite the active role of a number of radical intellectuals, the communist revolution was led by those on the margins of the intellectual elite and oriented to those completely outside it—i.e., peasants and workers. Even during the Yunnan years early in the revolution, intellectuals were subjected to repression.

Thousands of intellectuals nonetheless returned from study abroad to help build a new China after the 1949 revolution. Most, however, were treated with suspicion from the start and attacked repeatedly in campaigns of rectification and antirightism, culminating in the Cultural Revolution. They were branded the "stinking number nine," added to the other eight bad social groups: landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, bad elements, rightists, renegades, enemy agents, and capitalist roaders. Peasant and worker skepticism toward intellectuals was nurtured and reinforced

by ideological campaigns. Though Mao himself was an intellectual of a sort, a proud author of classical poetry, he was unwilling to encourage similar occupations in others.

Deng Xiaoping, by contrast, had fewer intellectual pretensions but was much readier to grant intellectuals an important place in Chinese society. As the main individual agent in ending and undoing the Cultural Revolution, he was deeply appreciated by many Chinese intellectuals. Students and young intellectuals told me in 1984, at a high point of reformist optimism, how Deng had personally saved them from bleak years of working with (and in some cases being tormented by) the peasants and how he had brought a large dose of meritocratic decisionmaking to a university admissions process previously dominated by political, class, and other nonintellectual criteria. Hundreds of professors had been restored to their senior university positions; writers had been able to publish again; scientists had returned to their laboratories. As economic performance and technical know-how were extolled, at least some intellectuals came to be seen as central to China's future. Intellectuals remembered that Deng had not always been their friend, but for the most part they entered into a tacit bargain. In exchange for the chance to be respected advisers to the government and the promise that there would be no return to the persecutions of the past and the chaos of the Cultural Revolution, they offered quiescence and tacit support to the regime.

But as the 1980s and the reforms progressed, the romance between Deng Xiaoping and the intellectuals faded. Deng revealed the limits to his interest in liberalization, especially outside the economic sphere. Technocrats who worked in engineering, demography, econometrics, or other applied sciences moved up rapidly in the bureaucracy and academic hierarchy; humanists and cultural scholars found their work less valued and more controversial by comparison. More and more of them worried that China lacked any real vision of what it meant to be Chinese in this era of reform. They grew not only concerned for China's soul and future direction but also unhappy with their own position and level of influence.

As intellectuals gained in stature and numbers, they began to gain confidence and to push for further liberalizations or even to attack the government.¹⁴ The vanguard of this shift included astrophysicist Fang Lizhi, political scientist Yan Jiaqi, and investigative journalist Liu Binyan. As vice president of the Chinese University of Science and Technology, Fang joined with his colleagues to create a haven for free thought and nurturance of a more Western style of intellectual life. In and out of trouble with the Communist Party (of which he was a longtime member until his

expulsion in 1986), Fang traveled the country speaking to receptive campus audiences about democracy and the social responsibility—and importance—of intellectuals:

As an intellectual, one should be a driving force for society. One major aspect of the effort to push the society forward is to do a better job in our professional field so that we can give more to society. . . . Our social responsibility, so to speak, is for each of us here to work for a better social environment that will allow our intellectuals to make good use of their talent and work more efficiently. . . . One important sign of a developed society is that intellectuals have a say in social development and enjoy considerable influence.¹⁴

Fang was the Chinese intellectual who came closest to the Soviet and East European model of a dissident and indeed was sometimes called "China's Sakharov." Picking up a theme made prominent in the late 1970s by Ren Wanding, Fang probably did more than anyone else to spread the ideal of human rights as a basis for democracy: "What is the meaning of democracy? Democracy means that every human being has his own rights and that human beings, each exercising his own rights, form our society. Therefore, rights are in the hands of every citizen. They are not given by top leaders of the nation. All people are born with them."¹⁶

Yan Jiaqi was somewhat more cautious than Fang and more temperate in his arguments—at least before the 1989 protests. In both regards he was more typical of Chinese intellectuals, and he retained his Party membership right up until May 1989. While neither Fang nor Liu was an active force in the 1989 protests, however, Yan was perhaps the single most important senior intellectual publicly to take part in the movement. He was the principal author, for example, of the "May 17 Declaration," by which intellectuals first proclaimed themselves willing to join as a visible, organized group in the protests. In this statement, Yan spoke sharply: "It has been seventy-seven years since the downfall of the Qing Dynasty. Nevertheless, China still has an emperor who only lacks a formal title, and a dictator who is senile and incompetent."¹⁷ As early as 1980, Yan had starkly criticized the persistence of "imperial power" and "imperial position" in communist China and called for reforms to abolish them. But he did not present this as being in any sense an attack on the Party; rather, it was a call for internal reform in accord with the Party's own principles.¹⁸ He had wide contacts in Zhao Ziyang's reformist wing of the Party and stressed the idea that democracy is an "error-correction mechanism."¹⁹

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"Democratic politics" is a kind of procedural politics. Democratic politics does not have to search for perfect "successors," but emphasizes human imperfectability; to err is human. When members of an organization or group disagree on a goal, view, or value, democracy means decision making and revising through predetermined procedures that members agree upon. Democracy cannot guarantee perfect decisions, but it can guarantee that wrong decisions may be corrected by following predetermined procedures.²⁰

In the late 1980s, Yan later confirmed to me in an interview, he still thought China could make gradual progress toward democratization without a sharp break with the existing government. (Indeed, he still believes reformers can gain the upper hand after the death of Deng Xiaoping or some other development shakes up the current ruling coalitions.)

Above all, Yan was known in China for his history of the Cultural Revolution, which he wrote with his wife, Gao Gao. Party conservatives tried to repress the book, partly no doubt because it extensively documented the evils of the Cultural Revolution but perhaps more basically because it argued that the Cultural Revolution was not a mere accident or epiphenomenal deviation. The book sold more than eight hundred thousand copies in China and became one of the central works in the reexamination of the Cultural Revolution during the 1980s. This reexamination was perhaps the single greatest source of popular and especially intellectual disenchantment with the communist regime.

The greatest protagonist of the investigation into the Cultural Revolution and its abuses of official power was Liu Binyan. Like Fang Lizhi, Liu was expelled from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1986 for his increasing dissidence. But unlike Fang, Liu had been a sincere believer in the communist revolution. As a journalist, Liu specialized in documenting the corruption of local CCP officials and the failure of the Party hierarchy to do anything about it. Because he was himself a Party member writing in an officially controlled press, his exposés sometimes carried more weight than those in Western papers; people sought him out to try to get their problems resolved. He maintained voluminous files on investigations all over China, often working with teams of assistants. When he felt he had documented a wrong that needed to be righted, he might send a file directly to a senior Party official such as Hu Yaobang as well as (or instead of) publishing an article about it. Of course, Liu was not always successful, and often his articles backfired, bringing retaliation rather than redress to those whose grievances he documented.²¹ Liu had been writing much the same sort of report for more than thirty years when he was finally expelled from the Party in 1987.

Liu Binyan joined the Communist Party as a teenager, five years before the 1949 revolution. He was active in the underground struggle first for liberation of China from Japanese occupation and then for Communist victory over the Guomindang. After the war, he returned to his plans for writing. "I wanted to use my pen to slash the pall hanging over China, to dispel the gloom and open up the mental horizons of the people."²² Unfortunately for Liu, he thought the gloom could be dispelled through honest reporting on the causes of China's problems. In one of his first major articles, Liu had told of two engineers. One had built bridges entirely according to Party directives, failing to take emergency measures; when floods came early in 1954, the waters washed away the bridge support his team had built. The other refused to wait for orders from above, changed the plans, and saved his construction team's work. The Party promoted the first engineer and demoted the second.

And so it was for Liu, though he continued to exhibit the second sort of loyalty. Liu lost some twenty-two years of his life to labor reform among the peasants and other punishments. He had only been rehabilitated a few months from his condemnation as a rightist when the Cultural Revolution began in 1966 and he was again attacked. Yet even in the midst of his sufferings, Liu could see positive potential in the Cultural Revolution's promise to decentralize China and its attack on bureaucratism, corruption, and special privileges for Party leaders. Though he was one of the most resolute and effective opponents of those who came to power during the Cultural Revolution, Liu was alone among intellectuals in his respect for its ideals. In this, and in having genuinely been a revolutionary, Liu was quite different from Fang Lizhi. He still believed in the ideals that motivated him to become a Communist in the first place. He was not just a spokesman for intellectuals but a man who clearly cared about all sorts of ordinary people; he wanted their freedom and their democracy as well as his own.²³

For all the personal troubles and sharp criticism visited on Fang, Yan, and Liu, the three maintained a certain optimism, an expectation that China would succeed in reforming itself and joining the world's democracies, a consciousness that their very capacity for voice was a good sign. By 1989 students were more pessimistic and focused on the negative. A poster on the Monument to the People's Heroes addressed Li Peng in April: "You say the 'Number Nines' are only members of the working class; how can we possibly accept this?"²⁴ Still, it should be noted that a genuine liberalization had taken place. The repression of the 1986-87 dissent had been mild. Publishing was still far more open than it had been during the first

three decades of the People's Republic. A variety of think tanks had been founded, some linked to Party reformers, others funded privately. Intellectuals were not just making speeches; they also were organizing in practical ways. This increasingly vital intellectual life in China led students to see a more urgent role for themselves and senior intellectuals as guides and consciences for the country.

The student protest movement of 1989 began with a central focus on issues of concern to students, who saw themselves as young and uncompromised intellectuals. The movement eventually made connections to a much wider range of people, however, through its condemnation of corruption. People whose concerns were primarily economic nonetheless responded to the students' initiative in confronting the government. At its core, however, this remained a student movement, framed primarily in terms of the specific concerns of intellectuals, especially such civil liberties as freedom of speech, publication, and assembly. These ends were sought not just out of selfishness but out of a sense that China needed the advice intellectuals had to offer.

What
is the
core
of
1989
movement
?

IV) Cultural Crisis

China's intellectuals, scientists almost as much as humanists, were preoccupied in 1989 with a sense of cultural crisis. Some experienced this crisis mainly through comparisons with the West and jointly condemned China's traditions and current leaders. Others focused on the disruption of traditional culture precipitated by late Qing incompetence and corruption, exacerbated by confrontation with the West, and continued by the anti-intellectual Communists. For both groups—and all who shared some views with each—the question of just what it would mean to be Chinese in the twenty-first century was of pressing personal importance. It was an issue not just of strategic or optional concern but of basic individual and collective identity. It went beyond the question of whether China would take its rightful place as one of the world's great powers to the question of what China, with any cultural integrity, could be.

Nearly everyone wanted to be proud of China and felt at least a twinge of humiliation at its current poverty and weakness, but not everyone was sure it could or should go on being the same China. To say so was still shocking, whether one meant the People's Republic or the traditional China that four thousand years of civilized history had left unprepared for the modern era. Poets and philosophers meditated on cultural identity. Econo-

mists and technicians debated whether Chinese culture was a block to modernization. Physicists such as Fang Lizhi and political scientists such as Yan Jiaqi could find common ground simultaneously praising the democratic openness of Western culture and the respect Western political leaders showed intellectual elites.

These concerns spread beyond the intellectual community. The repeated convulsions of the communist era—Great Leap Forward, Anti-Rightist Campaign, Cultural Revolution—had been profoundly unsettling. People felt a loss of personal moorings that stemmed from cultural dislocation as well as from more private injuries—damage to their careers or to their interpersonal networks. The coming of a new level of prosperity and rapid social change only accentuated the anxiety. Television, for example, had spread during the 1980s to even the most remote areas. Parents wondered why their children showed a lack of respect—and why they insisted on wearing blue jeans and strange hairstyles, listening to rock music, and reading incomprehensible poetry. Such concerns were not unique to China, but in China they were widely interpreted as part of a deeper crisis of culture. It was not just that the values of parental respect and poetic form were more basic in China than elsewhere. The crisis of cultural identity challenged individual identity as well. Chinese youths even underwent plastic surgery, altering noses and eyelids, to conform to what they saw as Western standards of appearance.²⁵

definition of it? The sense of cultural crisis was linked to political and economic questions. Were the Chinese people culturally incapable of democracy? Were basic failings in Chinese culture responsible for making the world's most populous and ancient country, once one of its strongest and wealthiest, now both poor and weak? Was there some cultural defect that made Chinese people put up with the evils and abuses of Maoist communism? More than anything else, the crisis of culture at the end of the 1980s was precipitated by the upheavals of the 1960s. The Cultural Revolution was both the greatest of the attacks on traditional Chinese culture carried out by the Maoist regime and the cause of severe psychosocial injury. Children condemned their parents publicly and joined in abusing them. Sisters attacked brothers; wives informed on husbands; and whole communities joined in reviling their own members and revering distant leaders who in retrospect seemed the cause of heartbreak and ruin, not of salvation. How could this have happened if Chinese culture had been healthy? How could it be changed?

Some responded to these concerns with a turn toward introspection. Others became wholesale Westernizers. Still others took up calligraphy or

founded institutes devoted to the study of Confucian thought. Whatever the response, however, the widespread feeling that all was not well with Chinese culture fueled a burgeoning discourse that helped pave the way for the 1989 protests. A new magazine seemed to be founded every few weeks in the late 1980s.²⁶ Original books and translations were published at a startling rate. Leading intellectuals drew enormous crowds when they arrived on college campuses to discuss the links between culture and the contemporary situation, echoing the famous formulation of 1919: science and democracy. For in that formulation—in 1989 as in 1919—science did not mean simply a specialized laboratory pursuit. It meant—much as it had in eighteenth-century Europe—enlightenment. And enlightenment was not just a state of mind; it was a cultural pursuit that involved reforms of almost infinite variety. In 1919 linguistic reform and the promotion of literacy were central. By 1989 reform embraced experimental theater and film—and spread throughout cultural production. At the same time, however, the decidedly mixed legacy of China's greatest experiment in cultural reform—Maoist communism—led many to a positive revaluation of traditional Chinese culture that did not figure similarly in 1919. 

THEMES AND PLAN

✓ Underlying conditions make a movement possible, but they do not make the movement happen. In the first place, underlying conditions are relatively continuous; they change more slowly than movements start. People respond to those conditions in a variety of ways, both individually and collectively, but these responses seldom coalesce into rapid growth of coordinated activity. A window of opportunity—often created by some unexpected event or short-term emergency—is generally needed before one of the many potential starts actually becomes a movement. The death of Hu Yaobang combined with the succession crisis and other underlying conditions to provide that opportunity in 1989.²⁷

✓ However, movements are products of human action, not purely mechanistic responses to opportunities, conditions, beliefs, or interests. To emphasize action is not necessarily to stress rational choice, calculation, and ✓ advance planning, though these may all be significant. The action in social movements consists also of choices made in the heat of struggle, decisions made on the run, and the sort of half-conscious improvisation that allows jazz musicians to harmonize and debaters to utter a verbal jab before they have even articulated it to themselves. In making the 1989 movement, students responded improvisationally to a wide variety of opportunities and

3 Crisis, Climax, and Disaster

WAITING FOR THE BALANCE TO TIP

As heavy news coverage showed the world, the imposition of martial law was a failure. Though massive, the initial troop movements were somewhat tentative. Soldiers made no attempt to force their way through resisting crowds. Instead, commanders allowed troops to be stopped on the periphery of Beijing by the *laobaixing*, who took it upon themselves to act as citizens rather than the government's masses. To the surprised and deeply moved students, it seemed that in every neighborhood there was an old woman who placed herself in front of troop trucks, saying they would have to run over her if they were to move against the protesters. Students and other protesting groups tried to turn the soldiers' loyalties from their government to their nation. But if the popular story was one of citizen power, it was apparent that the regime had not exhausted its resources: It made plans to bring in fresh troops and to use force.

From May 20 to June 2, life in Beijing was an emotional roller coaster.¹ Popular participation in the movement ebbed and flowed. At first people stayed up all night on barricades, waiting to defend the city against the army. The Paris Commune sprang to my mind; similar thoughts occurred to Beijing citizens, especially older ones who had read a bit more Marx than today's students. Later people grew tired, and the immediate military threat seemed to pass. Rumors spread simultaneously of popular victory and an imminent crackdown, of a military coup and a siege of the city. As the stalemate continued, eyes turned toward the internal power struggles of the government. Would Zhao Ziyang lead reformers to a new and secure dominance? Or would the old guard and its protégés (including Li Peng) oust the others as too sympathetic to students, capitalism, and the West?

As the balance of evidence and opinion turned toward the latter possibility, fears of repression grew. There was no clear sense, however, of whether the government would take action in a week or a month, and hopes remained strong in many quarters that the protesters would eventually regain the initiative.

By this time, people from various parts of Chinese society had joined the original student activists in Tiananmen. Provincial students outnumbered those from Beijing, and most of the people packed into the Square were ordinary Beijing residents. Some were active in the protests themselves, though the actual occupation remained mainly a student affair; most were simply curious, generally supportive onlookers who swelled the size of the crowds. Entrepreneurs catered to them with Tiananmen Square t-shirts, souvenir photographs taken in front of the Goddess of Democracy statue, and an array of snacks and drinks.

In the meantime, the government tried staging demonstrations of its own. The biggest progovernment manifestation was a march in the suburbs of Beijing on May 31. Several thousand peasants, cadres, and others marched in Ro, Fengtai, and Daxin counties just south of the city. Their slogans gave a suggestion of how the government wanted to interpret the events (though the words sounded implausible in the mouths of peasants). "Down with Fang Lizhi!" shouted the demonstrators, referring to the prominent physicist and human rights activist. Fang was not only condemned as a conspirator but even burned in effigy twice. The Hong Kong paper *Ming Pao* identified one Zhou Xing as organizer of the march and quoted his explanation: "[S]ome troublemakers want to put pressure on the government. Fang Lizhi is one of them."² This terse summary of the official line was as deep an explanation as any reporter could get from the participants for their actions.

The government was also now a continuous presence in Tiananmen Square and its vicinity. Its loudspeakers were mounted on lampposts throughout the area and blared a continuous stream of warnings. Less noticeable, but not overlooked by most locals, were its security cameras. And although uniformed police had disappeared from Beijing, various plainclothes police were active in the Square, sometimes identifying themselves openly. Last but not least, the soldiers who had been smuggled into the center of the city days before were coming out more and more often, sometimes in uniform, to look around.

The government's security agents did not always stay in the background. A little after 1 A.M. on May 30, for example, they arrested Shen Yinghan.

Shen was a founder and leading member of the Beijing Workers Autonomous Federation; at the time of his arrest he was carrying notebooks reporting, among other things, the disposition of funds raised by the union. The organization's leadership immediately issued a public protest, describing the action as a "kidnapping" rather than an arrest and calling "on the great mass of workers to take action and demand that workers' representative Shen Yinghan be released at once. Workers also have the right to be patriotic. Save our workers' representative!"³ In fact, the government was much more worried by workers' attempts to claim and exercise their "right to be patriotic" than by the students' actions. It is no accident that arrests began with workers rather than students. In the short run, though, they seem to have brought the BWAFF attention and sympathy; its roster reputedly swelled to some ten thousand members in the days just after the arrest.⁴

In a rare show of solidarity, students rushed to join the workers in protesting the apprehension of Shen Yinghan. On the day of the arrest, Han Dongfang led the group to the Public Security Bureau's nearby office. Later that day, the student leadership even allowed the BWAFF to use the steps of the Monument to the People's Heroes—which the students considered their turf—for a press conference. This event went smoothly at first as Li Jinjin, a Beida doctoral student-turned-worker, spoke, denouncing the Public Security Bureau's action. But when Han Dongfang took the microphone and began to speak about the BWAFF itself, students began to shout, "Who is this guy?" "We are the vanguard!" "Get down, leave!" Solidarity was precarious.

The BWAFF was mainly composed of employed men (and a very few women), but many of the working class people in the Square were unemployed. These young men roamed the streets in bands of a score or more, sometimes styling themselves "dare to die" squads, and were among the most bellicose of the groups in and around the Square. Their presence gave the crowd a much surlier tone and greatly diminished the students' ability to maintain order and ensure a peaceful response to military provocation. A "dare to die" squad trashed a jeep that someone claimed had been used in seizing Shen. This was one of the first acts of real violence in the protests. Students wondered whether some of the cyclists or unemployed workers were agents provocateurs; however, emotions were running so high and hostilities were so open that no agents provocateurs were needed to rouse the crowd. And perhaps the six weeks of protest, capped by the raising of the Goddess of Democracy statue on May 30, offered more than enough provocation to the government.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

In retrospect, the end moves of this Beijing struggle seem to have begun late on Thursday, June 1. A few more policemen had gradually become visible on the streets, though not an alarming number. The soldiers who had been camped in the Beijing train station came out for brief public forays—jogging around Tiananmen between 6 and 7 A.M. on Friday, for example. On campus, pressure was stepped up to get classes meeting again. The vice chancellor of Beiwai reported that 60 percent of undergraduates had returned to the university. The claim seemed plausible from just looking around, though it was not clear that the returning students considered themselves no longer on strike. Central education authorities seemed to have told campus officials and faculty that they must increase efforts to resume normal activities. At the same time, the government began to reiterate the martial law decrees prohibiting foreigners from associating with, reporting on, or being in the vicinity of any people committing banned activities. Such activities were defined sufficiently broadly that they included virtually all gatherings of any groups, critical discussions of the government, even the reading of posters. In short, an effort was being made both to get foreigners to stay home and to minimize journalistic coverage of the struggles. New regulations aimed specifically at foreign journalists were promulgated, calling among other things for all non-PRC reporters to apply to the municipal government for a new permit if they intended to report from Beijing and specifically banning coverage of the activities in and around the Square.⁵

June 1 was China's Children's Day. This is usually celebrated with great pageantry in Tiananmen Square; children are bussed in from all over the city. This year the government demanded that the Square be cleared for celebrations, attempting to tug on the students' heartstrings (or those of broader audiences) by reminding them how they had looked forward to Children's Day when they were younger. Similar propaganda blared out over the north end of the Square on high-powered loudspeakers; the students competed with their own, somewhat weaker sound system. Throughout Beijing, the government made a new effort to recapture public attention. Hotels and office buildings were draped with banners early Thursday morning. Properly printed rather than handmade, these bore slogans such as "Take a firm stand against bourgeois 'democracy'" and "Support the great, glorious, and correct Chinese Communist Party."⁶

Students made their own Children's Day entertainment plans for any youngsters who might come to visit. Many did arrive, even after the gov-

ernment canceled the official celebration. Most of these were brought by their parents, though a few classes attended, accompanied by their teachers. The schoolchildren, perhaps prompted by teachers, told the protesting students they believed in democracy and offered small collections of money—90 yuan from one group I saw—for “their big brothers and sisters.” Some students put on a song-and-dance show to entertain the youngsters. The atmosphere was relaxed but the enthusiasm desultory. Picking up garbage was the day’s dominant activity.

Thursday’s strangest event was the botched kidnapping of Chai Ling. Coming on the heels of the arrest of Shen Yinghan, this was quickly interpreted as another provocation from the government. The rumor spread like wildfire but (at least in my hearing) always with a note of puzzlement and sometimes skepticism. The latter was well founded, for by the end of the day it was learned that the attempt to kidnap Chai had been engineered by some of the provincial students, apparently upset about rumors that funds had been misappropriated. The would-be abductors had grabbed Chai and her husband, fellow student leader Feng Congde. When Feng resisted, the kidnappers ran away. Chai later named some of the provincial students she thought she recognized and suggested to reporters that they might have been bribed by the government. It must be noted, however, that the stories about misappropriated funds were not entirely without basis; the record keeping of Protect Tiananmen Headquarters was chaotic at best, and tens of thousands of yuan went unaccounted for.

The sense of internal conflict was increased by Li Lu, who accused student guards of having been drunk on duty. This lapse, he said, enabled the government to infiltrate the occupation and cut off the telephone used by the headquarters and two loudspeakers on the monument. Verification of this sabotage was impossible; some other students suggested there was no telephone to cut off. The different views reflected, among other things, different levels of access to the various inner circles of leadership. Students had apparently commandeered space under the Monument to the People’s Heroes for their communications center; it likely had a telephone, though I personally did not notice. Whatever did happen, trust and organization were both wearing thin. There were increasing quarrels between Beijing and provincial students, and the Beijing Federation itself underwent a change of leadership. An announcement on June 1 said that both Wang Dan and Wuerkaixi had been replaced the night before.

The three main student groups—Protect Tiananmen Headquarters, the Beijing Federation of Autonomous Students Unions, and the Federation of Students from Outside Beijing—held a joint press conference on June 1.

Once again they stressed their willingness to resolve disputes through dialogue with the government. They indicated that their patriotic and democratic movement was not to be influenced by the power struggle within the Party and stated four demands: an end to martial law, withdrawal of occupying troops from Beijing, an end to news censorship, and a guarantee that student protesters would not be subjected to reprisals. As some observers noted with surprise at the time, the statement of demands did not call for retraction of the April 26 editorial. This omission may indicate as much as anything the passage of time and the absence from the leadership of many of the original organizers at whom the editorial was aimed.

The pace picked up on Friday, with the soldiers taking a higher profile. The army took control of the Beijing television and radio stations, as well as the telegraph and post offices. Early in the morning several thousand troops pushed toward Tiananmen Square up Chang'an Boulevard from the west, but they were easily stopped in front of the Beijing Hotel by bystanders and retreated after minor scuffles. The soldiers were clad in combat uniforms and helmets but scantily armed. Rumors spread of an assault on Tiananmen to topple the Goddess of Democracy. Government condemnations of the protest focused even more on the statue than the students themselves did. The official media called it an insult to the people's heroes and martyrs and an affront to the solemn dignity of Tiananmen Square; the government merely described it as an unauthorized permanent structure. In fact, as Wu sums up, "The statue of the Goddess of Democracy was a monument that was *intended* to be destroyed, because its monumentality would derive from such self-sacrifice. In this way, this statue separated itself from those permanent 'revolutionary monuments' whose photo images fill a tourist guide or a textbook. These permanent monuments are consequences of revolutions—like the Monument to the People's Heroes built to mystify a glorious past—but not revolutions themselves."⁷ This analysis makes sense, but we should not let it obscure the equal truth that the statue was an act of theater, presenting the student movement as the monumental equivalent of a government. Though some two hundred thousand soldiers were said to be stationed around the city, the statue remained in place—for the time being.

Friday morning the government sponsored another counterdemonstration, a rally by peasants on the outskirts of Beijing. A variety of foreign journalists were rounded up, but the event seemed so obviously staged that few of the reporters were impressed. The crowds were neither large nor terribly enthusiastic; peasants readily admitted that they had been paid to

participate. This event brought the government less press coverage (and distracted less from the students) than the demonstration it staged two days before.

A NEW HUNGER STRIKE

The big event planned for June 2 was the initiation of a new hunger strike. This time it would not be students but four established young intellectuals who would take the lead. None had been among the leading democratic activists earlier, though all were public figures. By far the most prominent was Hou Dejian, a singer and composer whose popular song, "Descendants of the Dragon," was among those most familiar to the university students. The song posed the central dilemma of modern China—how could a country with such a rich history be so poor and weak? As Hou said:

The song just talks about the Chinese. We are a very ancient and very historic people, but our quality of life is still very poor. Can anyone tell us why? Have we ever thought about these questions—deep in our hearts? The major power to destroy the family, or the people, or the nation, is not from foreigners. It comes from ourselves. With that song, I wanted to make it clear that everybody should be thinking from the inside; that we should take a good long look at ourselves.⁸

Hou (thirty-two in 1989) was a particularly intriguing figure because he had been born and raised in Taiwan and moved voluntarily to the PRC in 1983, describing his move as "choosing liberty." Though he was appalled by the conformity and other aspects of life in the People's Republic, Hou felt he had come home and needed to confront the problems of collective and personal identity in mainland China. Though he had encountered a variety of difficulties in communist China, his return had been an important enough propaganda coup to the Party that Hou could count on an element of protection and freedom of action. This liberty didn't last long, however; because of his refusal to submit to authorities in his work unit (a matter of organizational rather than national politics), he was fired from the musical troupe he had originally joined and blacklisted for a time. His wife, a mainland musician, helped to support him. Eventually, however, he found a work unit willing to shelter him and provide him a base, and he began to build a successful career singing and producing videos. Royalties from sales to overseas Chinese helped to make him rich, and by 1989 he was back in Beijing, driving a red Mercedes.

The other three hunger strikers reflected diverse dimensions of the intellectual culture of China. Like Hou Dejian, however, all were relatively privileged and successful, beneficiaries of the transformations of the 1980s but frustrated and caught in the broader search for a new Chinese identity. Liu Xiaobo, thirty-five, was the enfant terrible of Chinese literary critics. A brilliant young Ph.D. and extremely popular lecturer at Beijing Normal University, Liu had made his reputation more as a somewhat cynical challenger to the elites of his profession than as an activist. He had been in the United States for a conference at the outset of the student movement and, after initially stating his doubts that it could amount to anything, returned in order to participate. Indeed, Liu challenged the intellectuals pontificating about the student movement from the comfort of California: "Either you go back and take part in the student movement [or] you should stop talking about it."⁹ Liu was the principal author of "Our Suggestions," a tract passed out by the hunger strikers calling for immediate goals such as an end to martial law and urging that organized autonomous groups be elected by different sectors of society to represent their interests. Liu argued for rationality, democratic procedures, and the development of "civic consciousness."¹⁰

Forty-year-old Zhou Duo, a sociologist by training, was the head of the general planning department of the Stone Computer Corporation. This department was in effect a think tank closely allied to Zhao Ziyang's faction of the Party leadership and to even more radical reformers. Zhou was one of the social scientists most prominent in suggesting the practical reforms necessary for the continued modernization of the PRC. The fourth hunger striker, thirty-year-old Gao Xin, was a former chief editor of the magazine put out by Beijing Normal University and a member of the Communist Party.

At 4 P.M. that Friday, Hou, Liu, Zhou, and Gao mounted the Monument to the People's Heroes and declared the commencement of their hunger strike. "Our purpose," they wrote in a prepared declaration, "is to protest, appeal and confess. We are not looking for death, but for a real life."

In the face of the mounting pressure of military violence by the Li Peng government, which has lost its ability to reason, Chinese intellectuals must end our "osteomalacia," which we inherited from the ancestors of our ancestors over thousands of years. We have indulged ourselves more in talking than in doing. Now we are taking action to protest the martial law, to call for the birth of a new political culture, and to confess the mistakes we made in the past because of our "weak knees." We are all responsible for China's being left behind by the rest of the world.¹¹

Though they offered their protest and their confession as intellectuals, the four protesters argued for a political culture that replaced ideas of class division and struggle with a more general notion of citizenship. In the first place, they suggested, the communist emphasis on class struggle created a tendency toward violence and division, a tendency that had also produced the current martial law. This predisposition had to be countered with a recognition that democracy was built out of tolerance, cooperation, and the participation of the whole society: "Democracy is a political form excluding enemies and hatred; it requires mutual respect, forgiveness, and cooperation in making its decisions after discussion and voting." This more peaceable attitude was to be extended, they suggested, even to Li Peng: "Li Peng made serious mistakes in the office of premier; he should step down according to democratic procedures. However, Li Peng should not be considered our enemy. When he is out of his office, he will enjoy the rights that a citizen does. He can, if he chooses, hold onto his wrong political ideas." In the new political culture, class and other hierarchies would not dominate over citizenship: "The Chinese people must know that in the democratic process of politics, everybody is first and foremost a citizen, then a student, teacher, worker, cadre, or officer." Yet this was not a traditional Chinese appeal to unity or sameness over difference. On the contrary, in defending the importance of independent organizations, these new hunger strikers articulated as clearly as anyone in the movement the idea that no new "good emperor" could save the day and that democracy in its essence depended on practical decisionmaking procedures rather than transcendently noble leaders or pure ideologies: "What we need is not a perfect savior but a good democratic system," they wrote, alluding to the "Internationale." "We would rather have ten contending devils than one omnipotent angel."

Six weeks after the protests began, established intellectuals had finally offered a sustained discussion of its the movement's direction. They chided the students for using

non-democratic means to fight for democracy. They announced democracy as their theory, but they did not use it in coping with day-to-day routines. They lacked the spirit of cooperation, so their strength was wasted in conflict. Their decisions were temporary and inconsistent. The student leaders did not know how to manage money and materials. They were more emotional than rational and more involved in exercising their individual power than in practicing the democratic idea of equality.

However, the four acknowledged that the movement itself was an education in democracy, for the government and the Chinese people at large as well as for the students.

It is hard to know what might have come from this belated effort to deepen the movement's discourse about democracy. Certainly the government was past heeding any discussions of democratic practice or even any calls for tolerance and cooperation. And though Hou, Liu, Zhou, and Gao declared, "We have no enemies! Do not allow hatred and violence to poison our wit," they were a tiny group. A few prominent figures, such as political scientist and Zhao adviser Yan Jiaqi, appeared in person to wish the hunger strikers well. But among the students, though there was respect for the intellectuals' action, there was little discussion of their statement. To the original protesters and to the bystanders in Tiananmen Square, the four new hunger strikers were a curiosity alongside the rump of the occupation, not the center of a renewed movement. There were scoffers, too. The hunger strike was only symbolic: The four announced in advance that they were only forgoing sustenance for seventy-two hours—and Hou Dejian was leaving after forty-eight because he had to go to Hong Kong to cut a record. The Beijing Municipal Party Committee thought it safe to mock this "two-bit so-called hunger strike."¹²

The last student initiative was the attempt to create a "Democracy University" to give a longer-range focus to activities in the Square. This, too, was a response to the notion that understandings of democratic theory needed strengthening. It was also an answer to the suggestion of many graduate students and activists from the old Federation of Autonomous Students Unions that it would be best for the students to give up the occupation of Tiananmen and return to their universities for further study of democracy. Students from Hong Kong—especially the Chinese University of Hong Kong—were instrumental in organizing the Democracy University. It was to be an open forum for discussion, a "public sphere" that would nurture discourse not just among students but among people from all walks of life. Indeed, the plans for Democracy University were among the most clearly egalitarian of any launched by the protesting students. Organizers talked of how democratic discourse had to be an exchange among equals, not just a series of speeches from platforms. Democracy University was also explicitly proposed as a link among the various Chinas—Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the PRC. This proposal was a public recognition that all three lacked democracy in 1989 as well as a claim to equal Chinese identity by protesters from Hong Kong and Taiwan. One organizer, Fred Chiu (Ah Fei to most acquaintances), embodied much of this cosmopolitan mixture. A Hong Kong resident who had been educated at the University of Chicago (but also imprisoned on Taiwan for his activism),

he was as devoted to the struggles of workers for free and effective unions as to those of students for a voice in public affairs. The organizers of Democracy University invited Yan Jiaqi and Liu Binyan to be its honorary presidents and planned an inauguration ceremony fatefully for 8 P.M. on June 3.¹³

THE ARMY MOVES—TENTATIVELY

Friday night the initiative passed from the protesters. Shortly after midnight, a military jeep ran over four pedestrians in the area called Muxidi, west of Tiananmen; three were killed. It's still not entirely clear how the presumed accident happened. The official story was that the jeep was on loan from the army to China Central Television and that its military driver was on his way back to his barracks after dropping off the film crew when he lost control.¹⁴ According to the mayor of Beijing's report, the accident "was deliberately distorted as a provocation by martial law troops. The conspirators attempted to seize the bodies and parade them in coffins, stirring up the people and making the atmosphere extremely tense. After this incitement and uproar they lit the fire of the counter-revolutionary rebellion."¹⁵ Eyewitnesses estimated that the driver was going 100 kilometers an hour, however, and in the midst of martial law and the progressive military occupation of the city, many people were ready to believe the worst. The driver was taken into custody, but the stage was set for further confrontations. Many people seemed almost to be spoiling for a fight. The mood had not been altogether cheerful for some time, but before the accident it still had been fairly relaxed. Sightseers mingled with the crowd and had their pictures taken first with the Goddess of Democracy as backdrop and then with the giant portrait of Mao and the gate to the Forbidden City. A few vendors sold buttons proclaiming "Victor[y], Tiananmen, 1989," and others hawked t-shirts with the two-fingered victory salute on them. But after Friday no one was entirely at ease.

Early Saturday morning a small column of troops—most guesses are in the range of fifteen hundred to three thousand men—tried to enter Tiananmen Square on a forced march, half-running at times. They were unarmed, and they were repulsed by the crowd. Some students called after them, "We love the People's Liberation Army, the People's Liberation Army loves the people." But other protesters stripped soldiers of their tunics, helmets, and boots and sent them back humiliated.

At about the same time, other troops began moving toward the center

of the city and Tiananmen Square from other directions. They, too, failed to reach their objective. Just as on May 19–20, crowds of citizens and protesting students surrounded them and built barricades to stop them. There were a few instances of gunfire from the soldiers and a few cases where the crowds attacked the soldiers. Some students thought they had actually turned back the army; more puzzled over why the military would launch such a halfhearted assault and wondered what would come next.

At Zhongnanhai compound, from which China's senior leaders had hardly emerged for a month, protesters were teargassed shortly after midday and responded by throwing stones at police. When I passed by later, two rows of soldiers stared straight ahead and refused to make eye contact with students and workers who tried to talk with them from their own more ragged lines, just inches away. A protester told me they were new guards who had been brought in from Inner Mongolia and were unable to speak the Mandarin Chinese (*putonghua*) prevalent in Beijing. I never saw them speak at all. A student held a spent tear-gas canister as he made a speech denouncing what he claimed was the first use of the substance in the history of the People's Republic. Cracked bits of paving stones lay all about.

The eruption of violence caused near panic at Protect Tiananmen Headquarters. The leaders broadcast a final urgent appeal to mobilize against the government:

History will show that this day will be a symbol of shame, a day that the people will always remember. On this day, the government has ripped off the last shred of the veil covering its hideous visage. It has dispatched thousands of brutal troops and police, who have frenziedly attacked totally unarmed students and people, to suppress the students and people. They have used every type of weapon, from tear gas to electric truncheons. We no longer hold out any hope whatsoever for this government. We now solemnly declare: if Li Peng's government is not brought down, China will perish and the people will no longer have any right to existence whatsoever. Thus, we solemnly state that our rallying cry is: Down with Li Peng's government.

We call on the entire people to take action: Workers, strike! [People of Beijing], go on general strike! Resolutely resist the ruthless rule of Li Peng's government! We appeal to all of our classmates to return quickly to Tiananmen Square to defend our position. In the future, the Square will become the clearest banner of the triumph of truth over evil, of the people's triumph over fascism. We appeal to all patriotic soldiers with a sense of justice: please arise! Resolutely refuse to be the sacrificial objects of dictators! Do not open fire on the people!

We also appeal to all patriotic, peace- and freedom-loving people and

nations across the world: please give your utmost support and aid to the Chinese people's struggle for justice.

The people will be victorious! Truth will be victorious! Long live democracy! Long live the people!

Long live the Chinese nation!

All Beijing residents and students, join together!

Victory is near!¹⁶

The students at the headquarters overestimated the willingness of their fellows to return to Tiananmen for a last-ditch stand. More fatefully, they greatly underestimated the government's willingness to use "every type of weapon" against them.

A few students had ridden back and forth from Beiwai to the Square in the morning, keeping tabs on the situation but not returning to the occupation. When I decided to make the same trip, no one tried to stop me, though the government had been at pains all day to tell foreigners that they were forbidden from the streets and would be made to obey the decree by "any measures." Before I left Beiwai, a student claimed that the entire area around Tiananmen was sealed off by troops. His report, like those on the radio, implied that the soldiers had been rather more successful than turned out to be the case. Citizens were far more in evidence than soldiers, and the latter were not faring very well.

The citizens had set up a barricade at Muxidi, scene of the recent auto accident and a prominent residential area, near a major intersection on one of the main routes from the Haidian district to the Square. A big, articulated bus was now blocking Fuxingmen Boulevard. Further along, another bus was torn in half and combined with more of the ubiquitous iron and cement bicycle barriers. Beyond this were two captured military vehicles, one still occupied by half a dozen soldiers. The crowd closed tight around it; some people climbed all over it, pounded on the sides, and pressed up against the windows. The soldiers had been closed in there for six to eight hours by this point. A protester on the roof displayed weapons, clothing, and helmets taken from them. A little closer to the Square men, were disabling a couple of military trucks, working under the hoods and throwing out parts of the engines over their shoulders like characters in an old cartoon. Behind the Great Hall of the People, the crowd at another barricade held off several hundred soldiers trying to beat their way into the Square with belts. Glass was everywhere from broken windows. People had armed themselves with, among other things, branches torn from the trees that lined the avenue, and they beat the buses that had brought the soldiers until they were battered hulks. People's need to vent their anger was evi-

dent everywhere. The crowd had also captured a few weapons from the troops, which boded ill for the future.

The largest capture of arms occurred at Liubukou, just south of Zhongnanhai compound. A crowd of perhaps a thousand people swarmed over four military buses and a jeep. Youths jumped up and down on the buses' roofs and jeered at their occupants until taunting the helpless soldiers lost its novelty. From inside the buses, youths took several rifles, some ammunition, and a variety of other gear. The soldiers, outnumbered five hundred to one, offered no resistance. Every now and then, bystanders looked over their shoulders at Zhongnanhai compound, where thousands of troops were known to be billeted. Amazingly, none of these came out to rescue their fellows. Finally, at around 2 P.M. Saturday, some two hundred armed police staged a counterraid to retrieve the weapons. They fired tear-gas grenades as they charged out of Zhongnanhai's west gate, fought the crowd—principally young working-class men—with billy clubs, and finally reached the stranded buses, where they seized the ammunition and freed the trapped soldiers.

Students counseled nonviolence, for the most part, but they were not in the majority of this crowd; most evident were workers and ("waiting for work") youth. Indeed, workers continued to arrive at BWAf headquarters to register as late as 6:30 the evening of June 3.)¹⁷ Gangs of men in hard hats roamed the streets with hammers and wooden clubs, shouting at the soldiers. Students worried that these were agents provocateurs, and people on the street joined in trying to calm the workers. I saw enough such groups at various points around the city, and they seemed genuinely angry enough, that I doubt whether all were out to do the government's bidding. However, some students reported stopping trucks carrying helmeted workers near Tian Tan (a temple south of Tiananmen) and others near Jianguomen. These workers allegedly confessed to having accepted a bonus of two weeks' pay to come into the city to "help the soldiers."¹⁸

Did the soldiers need help? They certainly appeared to, as they were stopped time and again in their advances on the Square and forced to submit to badgering by the crowds; officers even asked openly for coins and went to use public telephones to call their superiors for instructions. But was this military incompetence? Was it popular strength? Or was it a plan? The recurrent forays of the troops had inflamed Beijing's population—could this have been part of an effort to create a pretext for the use of actual force? The soldiers were humiliated by their treatment and frustrated at being sent on missions they couldn't accomplish. Was an effort underway to get them angry enough to carry out violence against unarmed civilians?

Or was all this military activity just an elaborate series of feints designed to throw students and civilian defenders of Beijing off their guard? All these possibilities were raised at the time, though some, especially the last, have seemed more likely with hindsight.

Though the peaceful protest had begun to turn violent and people sensed that a confrontation was coming, few had any idea how brutal it would be. I didn't. I stopped to buy an orange soda from a street vendor. A group of students from my university passed by, marching under their familiar white, green, and rose banner. They smiled as I waved. I walked into Tiananmen Square to check on the Goddess of Democracy. She still stood, bedecked with flags and flowers. Some onlookers struck up conversation. "You like our Statue of Liberty?" they asked. "Just like the U.S.?" When someone asked about the original's provenance, my listeners doubted my claim that it had been a gift from France. A young man asked pointedly why, if the United States was the model democracy, President Bush hadn't issued any statement of support for democracy in China. Unable to answer, I moved on. That was the last time I saw the statue.

Just west of the Square, behind the Great Hall of the People, soldiers and the crowd were still facing off. Every now and then violence erupted, as it had done intermittently all day. Troops beat protesters with belts and truncheons; the crowd fought back with limbs pulled from the trees along Chang'an Boulevard. Though violence never entirely subsided, the troops were kept at bay (to what must have been their growing frustration). The conflicts were confined enough that a surprising number of families with small children came out to enjoy popsicles and the entertainment that street fighting offered. Around 7 P.M., I bought a crepe from a street vendor less than three hundred yards from a barricade behind the Great Hall of the People where troops were still challenged by protesters, occasionally flailing away with their belts.]

THE ONSLAUGHT

New troops had been brought to Beijing. The often-repeated rumor that because they were from Inner Mongolia they could not speak with Beijing locals was likely false. However, they had not been worn down by days of student propaganda, had not had doubts raised by chance conversations or observations or by reading the *People's Daily* during its period of sympathy for the students. For whatever reason, the new soldiers were impassive in the face of student taunts and imprecations, surer of themselves than earlier troops had been.

The government succeeded in getting a substantial number of soldiers to at least three locations close to the Square: Zhongnanhai, the central railroad station, and the old Imperial Palace museum—the Forbidden City. Students in the occupation headquarters received frequent bulletins on these troops. When a few thousand advanced on the Square the morning of June 3, some students thought the final onslaught had come, but the soldiers were enveloped by the crowd and never fired their guns. They were repulsed with light fighting; such skirmishes continued throughout the day. Even tear gas was used only once, as far as I could tell, at the gate to Zhongnanhai compound. These nearby troops were not those charged with the major action.

The army's biggest concentration was in the west. A substantial force had been gathered near a prominent landmark, the "Princess's Tomb," which lay five miles due west of Tiananmen Square and about as far south of the Haidian district.¹⁹ This area was near a number of military facilities and home to many officers of the Beijing garrisons. The buildup had been underway since the day before, local residents told me later, though it was only early Saturday evening that the soldiers came together in a large formation. Many had flowed in from the western suburbs where they had been camped. A similar, though apparently smaller, force had massed on the eastern fringe of the city.

Around 8:30 or 9 P.M. the army began a concerted movement toward the Square from both east and west. They fired a few times into the air as they began the push into Tiananmen Square. For those coming from the Princess's Tomb, the chosen path was a broad thoroughfare; a single continuous street, its first section was named Fuxing Road, the second Fuxingmen Boulevard, and the third Chang'an Boulevard, the Boulevard of Heavenly Peace. Residents would soon dub it "Blood Boulevard." The soldiers encountered civilian resistance almost as soon as they started moving. Perhaps emboldened by their successful blockage of the halfhearted military forays of the last two days, crowds surged around the troops; men, women, and children jammed the street in front of armored personnel carriers (APCs). Only a few of these people were actively trying to fight the soldiers; sticking iron rods into the tracks of the APCs, hurling stones, tossing Molotov cocktails to try to set fire to the military vehicles. Most people simply blocked the street, relying on their very presence to stop the troops. Over and over again people told me—and nearly every other interviewer—"I didn't think they would use live ammunition."

Yet the shout went up—"Zhendan!" ("Live fire!")—just west of Mu-

xidi. Armored personnel carriers moved to the vanguard and demolished the makeshift barriers citizens had erected. This happened first, apparently, in front of Gongzhufen, a traffic circle on Third Ring Road, adjacent to Muxidi.²⁰ This upper-middle-class neighborhood was home to a number of Party officials and professional elites (including Deng Xiaoping's personal cardiologist). Most of these residents stayed inside. Some had been given intimations that a crackdown was coming. Others were shot when the fire from soldiers' AK-47 rifles raked their windows.

The idea that barricades and crowds could stop a determined modern (even semimodern) army was quickly dispatched. The APCs flattened the barricades under their tracks and crushed more than a few citizens with them. A wide range of ordinary people were in the street. Most probably lived nearby—a few in Gongzhufen, more in the various other, less prestigious neighborhoods on either side of Fuxing Road. Men outnumbered women, youths outnumbered the elderly, but virtually every group was represented. These were *laobaixing*, the "old hundred names" of Beijing, ordinary people.

Though the army routed the civilian resistance, the *laobaixing* kept fighting back. An APC was stopped where Chang'an Boulevard meets Tiananmen Square and set alight by Molotov cocktails.²¹ Two Canadian journalists described the scene:

[A]nother armoured personnel carrier was fighting its way over extra blockades which had been dragged across Chang'an on the north side of the square. Long guard rails made of concrete and steel blocked the street, along with an iron fence. Some protesters hurled sticks and steel pipes like javelins, trying to jam the carrier's tread mechanism. It began to slow, lurching forward in jerky movements. When it tried to climb over another barrier, the vehicle got caught. A huge roar went up and the crowd moved in. The carrier rocked back and forth, then pitched forward and began to move. A shower of sparks flew from where a pipe was caught in the treads. The APC got perhaps five metres before it ground to a halt. The mob pounced on it, smashing steel pipes against the pillbox-style windows. Shattered glass sprayed into the air. A man in shorts and an undershirt jumped on top of the vehicle and began pounding it viciously. Others joined him. Before long, more than ten people wielding sticks and iron bars were hammering the vehicle. Molotov cocktails were readied and the assailants jumped down. A couple of the firebombs hit the rear of the APC's roof and caught fire. The man in shorts took a blanket soaked in gasoline and laid it on top. A thick cloud of orange smoke began to rise. The crowd surrounded the rear door of the carrier, pounding on it and chanting for its occupants to get out. Many were waving sticks and steel bars. The door finally opened; a flurry of rocks was thrown in its direction. The driver jumped out.²²

According to several reports, students intervened to save at least one of the APC's occupants. Witnesses elsewhere also reported that students negotiated the safe flight of trapped soldiers. Given the chance, many soldiers appear to have been eager to flee; indeed, thousands may have vanished into the night, deserting temporarily rather than facing the wrath of the crowd or shooting the citizens. A few of those pulled from stalled APCs were not so lucky. A Finnish journalist who had stood nearby told me with revulsion how they were literally torn to pieces. Other soldiers were burned inside their tanks and other vehicles, and some were hanged, providing footage for the films the government prepared later to bolster the claim that the troops acted in self-defense to put down a violent rebellion.

The government itself openly admitted that its army encountered massive civilian resistance; indeed, this resistance was cited as evidence of the severity of the "antigovernment riot" and the need to repress it.

From 10 P.M. to 11 P.M. [June 3], at Cuiweilu, Gongzhufen, Muxidi and Xidan, 12 military vehicles were burned. Some people threw bricks at soldiers. And some rioters pushed trolleybuses to the crossroads, set them on fire and blocked the roads. When some fire engines got there, they were also smashed and burned.

Around 11 P.M. three military vehicles were wrecked and one jeep was overturned at Hufangqiao and military vehicles on Andingmen overpass were surrounded. In Chongwenmen Street, a regiment of soldiers were surrounded, and on Jianguomen overpass 30 military vehicles were halted by barricades and another 300 military vehicles were halted to the west of the Beijing Coal Industrial School.

Trying to persuade the rioters to let them through, PLA men from warrant officers to generals were beaten up or kidnapped.²³

The worst bloodshed came as the soldiers fought their way past barricades at Muxidi. Crowds were particularly thick here, both because this is a densely populated part of Beijing and because the three locals had been killed there by the jeep the night before. Two of the apartment buildings at Muxidi—numbers 22 and 24—were among the most exclusive in Beijing, housing officials with the rank of vice minister or higher.²⁴ Once again, their residents had no protection against the wild firing of the soldiers. This gunfire was taken by many locals as evidence that the army was out of control, that the soldiers must have been drugged or otherwise goaded beyond normal endurance. Over and over again, Beijing residents reported the arbitrary, even random nature of the violence and their shock when they encountered it. One met "a girl whose body was covered with blood. I asked if she was wounded but she said no. An old watermelon peddler had been bayoneted to death by a soldier; she had blood on her because she had

tried to save the old man."²⁵ The shock was equally great for a graduate student from Wuhan University:

I left Beijing University at 11:30 P.M. When I reached Baishiqiao [the area near the Beijing Library, perhaps half the way to Muxidi], I sensed that something was wrong. I ran into someone going in the opposite direction. He cried as he told me, "They're killing people; many were killed around me." Others began to cry with him as they heard the news. . . . During the movement we had talked often about dying for democracy, but that was purely hypothetical. We never dreamed we would actually have to lay down our lives; it couldn't be true. I had to see for myself. . . . Flames lit the night sky as I got within a few hundred yards of Muxidi [sic]. Soldiers, wielding machine guns, crouched behind armored personnel carriers. I couldn't believe that this was Beijing. . . . I saw a young girl walking toward me along the sidewalk. She was weeping while murmuring to herself: "What is this all about? Why? Why?"

Then, at 12:30 A.M. on June 4, I saw the first corpse: a twenty-year-old man wearing a headband and a mask. He was lying on the concrete divider between the bicycle and automobile lanes, 200 yards from Muxidi.²⁶

Though some students were in the streets at Gongzhufen and Muxidi, it is crucial to emphasize that they were a tiny minority of any crowd and there almost by accident. These were neither crowds of students nor crowds mobilized by students. The violence was at its most severe when its targets were the workers and ordinary people of Beijing.

It is not clear why there was such an eruption of violence, a "paroxysm of killing," as Robin Munro has called it, specifically at Muxidi. One factor was probably accidental. The troops coming from the west were to meet at Muxidi with a unit of six hundred officers of the local People's Armed Police (PAP). These officers would have been much more familiar than the soldiers with the local layout and situation. But the PAP contingent was stopped—indeed, surrounded and ultimately dispersed—a mile and a half away in the *hutongs* (alleys) near Yuetan Park.²⁷ The provincial troops thus were on their own at Muxidi and confronting sharp—albeit mostly unarmed—resistance. We will never know for sure whether their violence was premeditated, brought on by the tensions and false starts of the last several days, motivated by anger at the crowds that challenged them, or simply the result of panic.²⁸

Whatever the explanation for the frenzied aggression of the troops, there can be no mistaking the intentions behind their deployment. The movement toward Tiananmen Square was a determined military operation, with troops coming from the east at the same time as from the west. Those coming from the east met less opposition but also fired repeatedly

on civilians and into buildings. It may be that the violence was greater than top officials intended, but there is no doubt that they planned the taking of Tiananmen Square to end the protests and authorized violent means. Indeed, General Xu Qinxian, the commanding officer of the elite Thirty-eighth Army (garrisoned at Beijing), had been relieved of duty and arrested in late May for failing to carry out martial law forcefully enough; he was later court-martialed. This treatment offered a warning to officers who might hesitate to attack as instructed. It is quite possible, in fact, that many troops did fail to fire on their compatriots. The Chinese government claimed as much in propaganda distributed after the massacre, indicating that this restraint was one reason many soldiers had died. The troops these officers commanded were primarily peasant youths, eighteen or nineteen years old. It is not hard to imagine that they panicked as they attacked their own capital, in some cases after being stuck on its outskirts for days. The most convincing explanation for the violence, however, is not that the soldiers were drugged or deranged but that they were ordered to shoot and to advance at any cost. Their heavy-handedness may also have been a result of their lack of experience in or preparation for urban combat (let alone crowd control). They were trained for conventional military clashes; their officers had gained experience by deploying tanks against Vietnamese forces.

The military operation to retake Tiananmen Square was massive: the divisions that fought at Muxidi were backed by tanks, armored personnel carriers, and more than two hundred thousand additional troops. It is as though government and Party leaders felt they had to retake not just the Square but Beijing itself. Indeed, this level of force, shockingly high for a mission allegedly to restore order in China's own capital, was more in line with an all-out invasion to capture the center of a city deemed hostile. Responsibility for the designation of Beijing as a hostile city must rest with the government, not the soldiers. It was the government that apparently ordered the military to secure the city at all costs rather than to protect the lives of civilians. It is possible that the violence was entirely intentional, sought by factions in the Party and state leadership to decisively defeat and intimidate democratic opposition. Excessive force may even have been deliberately used to alienate world opinion, thereby weakening the claims on power of those whose strength was their ability to relate to the West.

Analogies to the Paris Commune were popular on the barricades during the first days of martial law, and apparently the analogy still held: the invasion of the rebellious city and reprisals against the insurgents were comparable to those occurring after the defeat of the communards.²⁹

LAST STAND IN THE SQUARE

While the bullets flew at Muxidi, students in Tiananmen Square proceeded calmly with the inauguration of Democracy University at 10 P.M. A small crowd gathered around the statue of the Goddess of Democracy for the occasion. Zhang Boli, one of the vice commanders of the occupation, was named president. Yan Jiaqi, the honorary president, almost missed the opening. As he recalled later, "On 3 June, I thought that the idea had been abandoned, when at 10:30 I received a telephone call asking me to come offer the first course. I went then to Tiananmen at 11:30. The one and only course of this university lasted for thirty minutes: I explicated the concepts of the rights of man, of liberty, of democracy and I addressed an appeal to Li Peng."³⁰ At this moment, there was still hope in the Square. As Yan explained later,

no one had the feeling that it was dangerous, because we never believed the troops would fire. Therefore, when at 10:30 I took my bicycle to ride into the Square, I felt myself in complete safety. There were tens of thousands of people in Tiananmen but no one was afraid. When I had finished, I decided to return home since I had a lot to do the next day. At midnight in Tiananmen, one could not hear the gunshots. Thus, I had no realization of anything. An hour after my return home, I heard shots and I understood that everything had changed.³¹

Word of the killing and the troops' advance reached the students in Tiananmen Square. Wuerkaixi spoke over the student broadcast station: "The government has now placed itself in complete opposition to the people. Li Peng has become the universal enemy of our people: he will be judged by history, and he will be nailed to history's pillar of shame. We, the Chinese people, are now called upon to sacrifice ourselves for the sake of a beautiful tomorrow."³² Students gathered to offer a pledge, reported later by Chai Ling:

In order to push forward the democratic process of our motherland, to realize prosperity in our country, to avoid a handful of conspirators draining our great motherland, and to save the 1.1 billion Chinese from losing their lives in the white terror, I pledge to use my young life to defend Tiananmen and to defend the republic. My head may be cut off, the blood may flow, but Tiananmen Square must not be lost. I will fight until the last person falls.³³

Wuerkaixi was even more incendiary, according to Black and Munro, yelling into the microphone, "The citizens have a right to defend themselves, and the only way to do so is with force." An anonymous BWAf member

pleaded with the students and other protesters to carve out their place in history by remaining faithful to the highest pacifist principles of the democracy movement. "When the Dare-to-Die squads find themselves face-to-face with the soldiers," he shouted hoarsely, "the first thing they must try is persuasion. With our songs, our truth, and our sense of justice, persuade, persuade, and persuade again."³⁴

For two more hours, the soldiers' approach and their violence were still matters of rumor. As a Beijing lawyer reported, "Around 11:00 P.M., as I walked westward away from the square I saw people on bicycles rushing toward it, shouting hysterically, 'Soldiers are killing civilians!' No one could believe the killing had started."³⁵ The occupation leadership attempted to hold a news conference in the Square, but, as Chai Ling summarized, "unfortunately there were very few foreign correspondents, probably because they had been confined to their hotels by the military. We were also told that their rooms had been searched. Only one or two foreign press personnel managed to enter the Square."³⁶

The advancing troops reached the Xinhua gate outside the Zhongnanhai compound a little before 1:30 A.M. There they encountered the last real resistance of their push to Tiananmen Square. Now there were no more barricades. The advance guard set about clearing the area while the columns of troop carriers and tanks gradually caught up and deployed themselves around the intersection at the northwest corner of the Square, where The Beijing Workers Autonomous Federation had set up its tents; the first contingent of soldiers to arrive allegedly set fire to these. Several people were apparently shot in the area. The last obstacle before the army could enter the Square was a thin line of people with their arms linked. Perhaps a hundred gathered to make this last symbolic stand. Some told me they still had not absorbed the fact that the soldiers were killing those who stood in their way. Students returning to the Haidian district told of how a group of people linked arms in front of soldiers on Chang'an Boulevard and were shot down en masse. A second row of students (or, some said, workers) took the place of the first. Other reports suggest that students and workers were intermingled from the beginning and mention no second line.³⁷ It is still not clear to me whether this happened, at least with the dramatic staging described, though there is little doubt that both students and workers were killed and that both groups were unprepared for the deadliness of the military onslaught.

Gradually the troops took control of the northern end of the Square. There, a bus drove straight at the soldiers, its driver seemingly suicidal in his defiance. Automatic weapon fire raked the bus until it smashed into an

APC temporarily stopping the line of armored vehicles. A Hong Kong student leader, Kenneth Qiang, reported that "the driver was dragged out by soldiers and clubbed to the ground with their rifle butts. The crowd was incensed, and they ran forward to within fifty meters of the troops, throwing glass bottles at them. I heard two separate gunshots. The driver fell to the ground dead."³⁸

Other soldiers poured out of the Forbidden City through the Gate of Heavenly Peace. Government loudspeakers played a warning over and again:

The Beijing municipal government and martial law headquarters urgently announce that a counterrevolutionary rebellion is now taking place. Ruffians are violently attacking PLA soldiers, confiscating arms and ammunition, burning army vehicles, setting up roadblocks, and kidnapping soldiers. They aim to overthrow the People's Republic of China—to overthrow the Socialist system. PLA soldiers have shown a great deal of restraint in the past several days. Now we must crack down on this counterrevolutionary turmoil. All Beijing citizens should observe martial law and cooperate with the PLA to protect our laws and our great Socialist motherland. All citizens and students now in the square should leave immediately and let the troops carry out their tasks. We cannot guarantee the safety of those who disregard our advice. They will be completely responsible for anything that happens to themselves.³⁹

Students struggled to make their response heard over the din by loudspeaker and broadcast:

Fellow students. We bear a historic responsibility. We must decide for ourselves whether to defend the monument. We should stop those who are trying to resist the army. Stop anyone trying to fight back.

All students guarding the square, please return to the monument. We must protect the monument. Protect our banners of democracy.⁴⁰

WITHDRAWAL FROM TIANANMEN

Most of the students who had remained in the Square gathered around the Monument to the People's Heroes, near Mao's mausoleum toward the southern end. Some three thousand, perhaps as many as five thousand, were still there to gather around Chai Ling and the four hunger strikers. There they waited "stoically," according to American journalist Richard Nations. The army continued to move in around the northern perimeter of the Square. Several thousand troops, each armed with an AK-47 automatic rifle and a long wooden cudgel, were massed at the steps to the Museum of Chinese History.⁴¹ Soldiers had arrived earlier from the east and blocked

Chang'an Boulevard in front of the Beijing Hotel; they were met by others moving out of Tiananmen Gate to seal off the northeastern entrance to the Square. There was a prolonged pause in the confrontation as the enormous army that had fought its way from the Princess's Tomb massed before Tiananmen Square. In Munro's summary:

After the arrival of this main force, only a sprinkling of people—apparently not students but ordinary residents and workers—remained in the northern part of the square, between Changan and the monument. The statue of democracy looked more dramatic than ever, facing Mao's portrait and the troops beneath it through the flames and smoke that still billowed from the crippled A.P.C. At around 2:15, there was a terrific burst of AK-47 fire, lasting several minutes, from the vicinity of Tiananmen Gate. I hit the deck. Most of the crowd fled southward, toward the monument, but I saw no one injured.⁴²

Chai and other student leaders urged those who gathered at the monument to remain peaceful. Earlier they had persuaded a group of students to surrender guns they had taken from captured vehicles, lest they provoke an attack or provide fodder for government propaganda. Hou Dejian reiterated the appeal. Students turned over a machine gun, two semiautomatic rifles, a pistol, and a box of Molotov cocktails. A group of workers manning a machine gun at the top of a flight of steps on the monument were also persuaded to surrender their weapons. Liu Xiaobo and others destroyed the weapons in front of reporters, who took photographs.⁴³ Now, said Chai Ling, nicely mixing prudence and principle, "We were ready to receive the butcher's knives in peace. It was a war between love and hate, not between violence and battle forces. We felt that the patriotic democratic movement, which was based on the principles of peace, would fail if the students tried arming themselves with gas bottles and wooden clubs to resist the machine gunners and tank drivers, who had already lost their ability to reason."⁴⁴ Protect Tiananmen Headquarters' sound system still worked, and loudspeakers played Hou Dejian's "Descendants of the Dragon." Some students hummed or sang along.

As 3 A.M. approached, Chai made a short speech, often quoted since:

I said there is an ancient story in which about 1.1 billion ants lived on a hill. One day a fire broke out on the hill, and the only way to safety was to go down to the foot of the hill. To save themselves from the fire, they all clung to one another in a big ball, and tumbled down the hill. The ants that were on the surface of the ball were killed by the fire, but the majority were saved.

I told them that we were standing at the forefront of the nation, and we were all aware that only sacrifice could bring life back to this republic.⁴⁵

Holding hands together, Chai said, the students sang the "Internationale" over and over again. Three of the four older hunger strikers pleaded with them to withdraw rather than add to the horrendous sacrifice that had already been made. As Hou Dejian recalled it, of the older group, only Liu Xiabo insisted on defending the Square to the death, but in the end even he gave in.⁴⁶

It was not clear at first whether the students would be swayed by the prudence of Hou, Gao, and Zhou or by the passion of Liu. One self-declared leader of the Beigaolian argued for staying: "Students! We must on no account quit the square. We will now pay the highest price possible for the sake of securing democracy in China. Our blood shall be the consecration."⁴⁷ A few minutes later a leader of the Beijing Workers Autonomous Federation argued the contrary position: "We must leave here immediately, for a terrible bloodbath is about to take place. There are troops surrounding us on all sides and the situation is now extraordinarily dangerous. To wish to die here is no more than an immature fantasy."⁴⁸

Two Red Cross doctors suggested that someone try to negotiate with the soldiers to secure a peaceful withdrawal from the Square. Though no collective decision had yet been made to leave, Hou Dejian and Gao Xin decided to see if the troops would cooperate.

When we reached the corner of the square we saw a mass of troops. We got out of the ambulance and ran toward them. As we approached, we heard the clicking of rifles and the troops shouted to us to stop.

Their political commissar, Colonel Ji Xinguo, listened to our request and then asked us to put an end to our hunger strike. We replied that we had already done so. Then, in a very gentle manner, the officer said he had to consult headquarters. Within five minutes of his leaving us, the lights in the square went out. We were very frightened. The soldiers were impatient. Some clicked their guns, some shouted, others stamped on the broken bottles that littered the area. The four of us stood there, not daring to move. The doctors called on the troops to hurry.

Finally Colonel Ji reappeared and told us that headquarters had agreed to our request, and that the safest route for withdrawal was the southeast.⁴⁹

A German journalist taped Hou and others speaking to the students gathered around the monument:

HOU DEJIAN:

We cannot remain here anymore. Students and citizens, I dare to say that our movement has succeeded [*cheers and applause*], but we have not won today. Students, all the people here now are outstanding citizens of China [*applause*]. None of us fears death, but our deaths should serve some purpose. Speaking on

behalf of four of us who are hunger-strikers, we didn't consult with you students for your permission to take a certain action. A moment ago we went to the north side of the square to talk to the soldiers. We found their commander. We were hoping that no more blood had to be shed. We spoke with the political commissar of troop 51048, Colonel Ji Xinguo, and he reported to the command post of the martial law forces. We all agreed that all citizens of the People's Republic of China should leave the square in safety.

MALE VOICE: No! No!

ZHOU DUO: Students! If we can save even one more drop of blood now, there will be that much more hope for the future of our march toward democracy.

[Sound of tanks passing]

MALE VOICE: Please be quiet!

ZHOU: We have agreed to lead the students away from the square as quickly as possible. The soldiers told us that they have orders from their commanders to clear the square before dawn. That means they are going to use any means necessary.

Students, we cannot use fists against soldiers armed with rifles and bayonets. There are no more conditions for further negotiations. We must now try our best to save ourselves. They have agreed to leave a path at the southern corner of the square for us to withdraw. We hope we can withdraw in an orderly, safe manner, at once.

LIU XIAOBO: If we want to achieve democracy, we must start now, with ourselves. The minority should listen to the majority. That is a basic principle of democracy.

HOU DEJIAN: Friends, no matter what you think about what I have done, I hope we can leave safely and peacefully. I personally shall remain in the most dangerous place of all until the last of you have left.

[Applause]

LIU XIAOBO: What Hou just said represents the wishes of all four of us. We will stay until the last one of you leaves.

FIRST MALE VOICE: What's wrong with these guys?

SECOND MALE VOICE: You Fascist running dogs!

MALE VOICE
(OVER LOUDSPEAKER): They've stabbed the people in the back. If we stay, we'll die needlessly. Some students want to stay because they have delusions about the government not

- using force on them. But it's absurd to risk our lives. We should preserve our forces. Now, I beg you to withdraw from the square immediately.
- LIU XIAOBO
(OVER LOUDSPEAKER): Let's hold each other's hands. Let's be quiet and think about the situation carefully, and about what we should do next. The decision on whether to leave or not depends on everyone here.
- MALE VOICE: If we must die, let's die together!
- LIU: Students! Students! Throughout the movement, the citizens of Beijing and the workers gave us great support. We cannot win the movement without their support. Now I'm sure the students in the square can leave together safely, but I cannot guarantee the citizens' safety. At this important moment, I appeal to all the students to try your best to protect the citizens and leave the square from the south corner in an orderly manner.
- MALE VOICE: Hurry, let's go!
- ANOTHER MALE VOICE: Sit down!
- THIRD MALE VOICE: Point your guns at us! Go ahead!
- [the "Internationale" is sung]
- CHANTING CROWD: The People's army does not fight the people! The People's army does not fight the people!
- MALE VOICE: If I had a gun, I would not be afraid to use it.
- STUDENT BROADCAST: Soldiers and officers, you are the sons of the people! Don't point your guns at the people!
- CROWD: Don't point your guns at the people!
- MALE VOICE: What are they doing?
- [Gunfire]
- MALE VOICE: They're shooting at the loudspeakers!
- ANOTHER MALE VOICE: Those are real bullets!
- THIRD MALE VOICE: Don't shoot at the monument!
- CROWD: Don't shoot at the monument!
- FEMALE VOICE: Don't shoot at the monument! . . .
- MALE VOICE: Protect yourselves—they're going to fire tear gas!
- [Sound of tanks and gunfire]
- MALE VOICE: Drag her! Pull her into line!

ANOTHER MALE VOICE: They're going to hit us. Stop it! Stop!

MALE VOICE: I told them to leave their tents. They wouldn't follow my advice.

[the "Internationale"; machine-gun fire; screaming]

MALE VOICE: Let's hold together tightly.

[the "Internationale"]

FEMALE VOICE: Don't panic!

ANOTHER MALE VOICE: Don't push! Don't push!

MALE VOICE: Don't hit people! Don't hit people!

[Cursing; a babble of different dialects]

MALE VOICE: Don't panic!

ANOTHER VOICE: My glasses!

MALE VOICE: Let's go! Let's go!

MALE VOICE: Stop pushing, stop pushing. . . . I'm falling!⁵⁰

The students and citizens began to withdraw, heading to the southeast as requested. The soldiers began to press in. The recorded shooting had occurred when an advance contingent charged up to the monument, leading Chai Ling and other students to think they had broken their promise to allow safe passage. Chai recalled:

[A]s the students were leaving, soldiers wearing combat helmets and armed with machine guns charged to the third tier of steps at the platform of the Monument. Before the Headquarters had a chance to announce the decision to withdraw, our loudspeakers had been strafed into shreds. This was the People's Monument! It was the Monument to the People's Heroes! They were actually shooting at the Monument. Most of the rest of the students retreated, crying as they retreated.⁵¹

Despite some reports of slaughter, the soldiers do not seem to have killed students at the monument. Their charge did, however, add to the confusion of the withdrawal. Hou recalled that he and Zhou moved to the northeast to roust the remaining protesters there:

People were still sitting on the ground there. Zhou Duo and I pulled them up whenever we could. "Blame me, curse me if you like, but move!" we said. Some extended their hands without saying a word. Others stood up and explained, "Teacher Hou, we don't blame you."

"Thank you," I cried aloud as I pulled at them.

Before the last group of students arose, troops pressed us from the west

in a human wall. They moved in quickly and squeezed us like water in the neck of a bottle, barely able to move. I could hardly breathe.

All around me plainclothes antiriot police were waving thick wooden sticks and beating people on their heads and bodies.

Students were bleeding. The crowd stumbled over iron railings that had been scattered on the ground. A whole row of people fell. Those behind fell over them, and the next wave over them.⁵²

ASSESSING THE DAMAGE

An armored vehicle eventually toppled the statue of the Goddess of Democracy. The action was captured on film and seen repeatedly around the world.

Pushed by a tank, it fell forward and to the right, so that its hands and the torch struck the ground first, breaking off. It must have been quickly and easily reduced to rubble, mixing with all the other rubble in the square, to be cleared away by the army as part of its show of cleanliness and order. The statue, however, could not be so easily destroyed. It was intended from the beginning to be ephemeral, and yet to endure as an image of the desire of the great mass of Chinese people for the ideals it symbolized. I envision a day when a replica, as large as the original and more permanent, stands in Tiananmen Square, with the names of those who died there written in gold in its base.⁵³

There is no shortage of martyrs to the Chinese government's repression of the protests of 1989, but the preponderance of evidence suggests that if any students were killed in Tiananmen Square that night, they were few. Though widely circulated, the idea of students being taken by surprise as they slept in their tents is implausible.⁵⁴ Very little carnage, if any, seems actually to have taken place in the Square. That millions of people around the world were virtually sure there had been, and almost thought they had seen it, was due largely to the deceptiveness of television reportage and editing. This illusion was generally unintentional but systematically produced by standard TV news practices and pursuit of the most exciting presentation. Robin Munro summarizes one instance:

Correspondent Richard Roth of CBS had time to file one last report before soldiers arrested him and took him into the Great Hall of the People. "Soldiers have spotted CBS News cameraman Derek Williams and myself and are angrily dragging us away. And a moment later it begins: powerful bursts of automatic weapons, raging gunfire for a minute and a half that lasts as long as a nightmare. And we see no more." The film was confiscated. Roth's dramatic commentary, aired on the June 4 *CBS Evening News* and accompanied by footage shot two hours earlier, left the clear impres-

sion that troops had opened fire on the students as they evacuated the monument.⁵⁵

Reports from putative eyewitnesses confirmed the supposed slaughter. The most prevalent one initially appeared in a Hong Kong paper and has been reprinted and excerpted many times since. Its author identified himself as a "twenty-year old student of Qinghua University." His account agreed in outline with those of Chai Ling, Hou Dejian, and Western journalists who were on the scene. The student claimed to have "witnessed the whole incident in which the army shot the students and the citizens." His recollection was similar to Chai Ling's up to the attack on the loudspeakers the students had set up at the Monument to the People's Heroes. He described this action as being more violent, with more physical attacks on students:

When we reached the ground the machine guns opened fire. Some soldiers knelt down to shoot, and their bullets just flew over our heads. But others aimed low, and their bullets hit the chests and heads of the students. We had to go up the Monument again, then the machine guns stopped firing. But the soldiers there forced us down again. Once again we were shot by the machine guns. . . . More than thirty armoured vehicles were driven at people. Some students were run over . . . thus the whole Square was in a state of chaos. I couldn't believe that the students were so brave. They rushed at the vehicles. Many were killed. Others stepped over the dead bodies and ran forward again. At last there was a gap, and something like three thousand students dashed out, reaching the Historical Museum. Only a little more than one thousand of these were to survive.⁵⁶

This is not an implausible story; the violence used by the army elsewhere in Beijing shows that it *could* have happened. But the only footage of the actual evacuation shows no slaughter. Says a member of the Spanish film crew that shot it: "There was absolutely nobody killed at the monument. Everyone left and no one was killed."⁵⁷

The killing took place mainly on the streets around the Square and those leading to the center of Beijing. Most of the videotape of military attacks on citizens seems to have been shot either in Muxidi or in front of the Beijing Hotel, just east of the Square. The early press reports inaccurately describing the Square as the scene of mass slaughter, as running with rivers of blood, gave the government the pretext for denying that such violence took place anywhere. The government's official account left out the violence elsewhere and the tension and clashes in the Square, but it was essentially accurate, if misleadingly bland, about the actual withdrawal. Indeed, it seemed to gain credibility by comparison with the exaggerated reports of the foreign press, which officials denounced as "a rumour spread by the

Voice of America and some people who deliberately wished to spread rumours. . . . During the whole operation no one, including the students who refused but were forced to leave, died. Tales of 'rivers of blood' in Tiananmen Square and the rumour-mongers themselves 'escaping from underneath piles of corpse' are sheer nonsense."⁵⁸ Saying "there was no killing in Tiananmen Square" became a cagey rebuttal to all accounts of a massacre, possibly true but hardly the whole story.

One crucial subtext was the fact that government violence was directed mainly against workers and other nonstudents. Recall Liu Xiaobo's statement at the Monument to the People's Heroes: "Now I'm sure the students in the square can leave together safely, but I cannot guarantee the citizens' safety. At this important moment, I appeal to all the students to try your best to protect the citizens."⁵⁹

By the small hours of Sunday morning the troops had cleared the Square, but the protesters, students and citizens alike, refused to give up. Throughout Beijing troops encountered surprising resistance. Some protesters threw rocks and Molotov cocktails. Others used weapons captured earlier from the army. Surprisingly often they managed to set a tank on fire, usually after persuading its occupants to surrender it but occasionally with the soldiers still inside. This opposition came less from the students—who had retreated to the campuses, their homes, or out of Beijing—than from local residents. No one attempted a frontal assault on the occupying troops, as far as I know, though many unfortunate soldiers perished or suffered beatings when they found themselves cut off in narrow alleys in the close-knit residential neighborhoods of Beijing. There, gangs of local youths turned violent, encouraged by their neighbors and knowing that potential witnesses were their relatives and friends. Torching a trapped tank offered an occasion for symbolic resistance and release from frustration. Such acts made the city look perhaps more war-torn than it was, as columns of smoke rose over a wide variety of neighborhoods.

DEFEAT, SHOCK, ANGER

For two days after this massacre, the people of Beijing moved about in a state of shock. Some retreated to their homes. Others scurried about the town trying to get a clearer sense of what had happened. Hospitals were overflowing with wounded. Sporadic shooting continued, and vehicles burned throughout an unusually hazy Sunday afternoon and much of Monday; occasionally an explosion indicated that another had been set alight. Everyone seemed uncertain of what would happen next.

Each time I ventured more than a mile or two from the university, an explosion or burst of gunfire—usually coming from somewhere out of sight but always sounding nearer than I liked—would frighten me back. I walked out Sunday night about 2 A.M. to find a crowd gathered around the burned carcass of a tank. I also saw what appeared to be a truck full of bodies (most covered with a canvas tarp). The army drove them out of town, I was told, to crematoria, where they could be made to disappear. Gunfire and cries could still be heard occasionally, though I was several miles from the heart of the struggle. And the sirens sounded all too often.

I resisted the urge to go to the center of Beijing, though many of the students I knew were braver. Instead, two expatriate friends and I checked in to the Shangri-La Hotel to use the phone and fax machine and to see the news updates every thirty minutes on CNN's Headline News, which was beamed in on satellite TV. The government had ordered these transmissions stopped, but someone had temporarily "forgotten" to shut the system down at the Shangri-La. My Chinese students came and watched the television reports. They used the phone to call friends around town and nearby, trying to verify various reports. We sent and received faxes; we cabled in reports to London newspapers and held telephone interviews with American television stations. We were, according to these reports, "eyewitnesses," yet what we could see on the streets was a small if powerful piece of the action.

As it happened, the Shangri-La was the base of the CBS television crew, which occupied an entire floor. It was also the hotel to which Fang Lizhi and his wife, Li Shuxian, China's most famous dissident intellectuals, briefly retreated under fear of arrest. They were brought in by Perry Link, one of the United States's leading specialists on Chinese literature. (Ironically, Link had been with Fang when the latter was turned away from a dinner to which George Bush had invited him while visiting Beijing the year before.) The Shangri-La is luxurious, tall, and modern, with a sleek, climate-controlled interior; it could be found in any of the world's major cities, but for a few decorative gestures toward China. Now, purely by chance, it was the meeting place for a handful of straggling tourists, late in fleeing the country; journalists torn between the exhilaration of an enormous story and the horror of what they had witnessed; Chinese staff in a state of shock; a few relatively anonymous Westerners such as me; and two of the most visible people in the background of China's democratic movement.

Professors Fang and Li were faced with a hard choice. To stay in their apartment or appear at Beida, where Li taught, was to court almost certain

arrest and trial as the putative "black hands" behind the movement. But staying in the Shangri-La or the Jianguo, another Western hotel (to which they moved because it was closer to the U.S. embassy), was disorienting and not a long-term solution. Yet to seek safety in the U.S. embassy, as they ultimately did, was a very bitter choice. Link managed to hustle Fang and Li into the embassy on June 5, before the PLA guards realized what was happening. The embassy offered "temporary refuge" but could not guarantee enduring political asylum or transit to the United States. Fang and Li took a day to consider the embassy's offer, but they finally concluded they had no alternative, even though it might mean an extended stay in very cramped quarters. Fang and Li were confined to the embassy for over a year before the Chinese government finally allowed them to go into exile. That Monday, before accepting the U.S. offer, Fang told Perry Link, "I think it would be good if the American Embassy gave protection to some ordinary people—a worker, a student, or just a regular townspeople like the ones who were killed last night. It would be a good statement about human rights—much better than taking in a famous person."⁶⁰

The students, workers, and *laobaixing* of Beijing were in retreat in their own ways, though a few brave souls spoke to foreign reporters. Some of these were arrested—one after the Chinese government intercepted the unedited ABC news footage of his interview from its satellite transmission back to the the United States. But most local residents simply stayed inside as much as they could, venturing out to stockpile essential foodstuffs in case of prolonged disorder. Many students returned to their parents' homes, but others talked of defending their campuses; a few said they were stockpiling weapons or preparing Molotov cocktails. And there were still some urban crowds, mostly small neighborhood gatherings around a smoldering military vehicle or one of the burned bodies the government left hanging from trees and lampposts as grisly reminders of the "counterrevolutionary rebellion."

One gesture of resistance from these days stands out. On June 5 one young man, a twenty-six-year-old printer, placed himself in front of a column of tanks seeking to move down Chang'an Boulevard, etching the image of his defiance into international memory. The tanks stopped rather than run him down. When they tried to go around to the left, then to the right, he stepped sideways to block their path. Then he clambered on top of the first vehicle and argued with its driver. Eventually, when the soldiers lost patience and made more threatening moves, the young man's friends dragged him out of harm's way (though he apparently was arrested several days later).

That morning I joined in one of the most widespread activities of the aftermath: the search for those who had disappeared. One student I knew had never returned from the center of town after the massacre. Twenty-four-years old, she was a bright, vivacious student of foreign languages. She had become involved in the movement gradually and was never a central activist. Yet she shook with anger after Li Peng's arrogant, hostile speech declaring martial law. She knew that protesting might lead to future reprisals against her, though I think she feared a bad job assignment or denial of a passport more than slaughter. But she did not discount violence altogether and helped talk me out of joining the march just after Li's speech. Now several of us focused our anxieties on looking for her. But hospitals were overflowing with victims of the massacre. The wounded lay on mattresses in the corridors, and there were too few staff to clean up the blood. Trying to find a particular individual was hopeless. The horrors we saw were never personalized on the faces of those we knew. Our friend turned up the next day after spending the night in another hospital, not as a patient but as a volunteer helping to care for the wounded. Thousands of other missing students had not been found by the time campuses began to empty on Tuesday, June 6. The majority had probably slipped off home, but not all; many parents would never know for sure how their children perished. The government took little responsibility. Chen Xitong, the mayor of Beijing, said that "among the non-military casualties were rioters who deserved the punishment, people accidentally injured, and doctors and other people who were carrying out their various duties on the spot. The government will do its best to deal with the problems arising from the deaths of the latter two kinds of people."⁶¹

At midday on Tuesday, I visited some student friends. Their anger was like a dose of amphetamines; they punched the mattresses on their bunks or stood, shaking, unable to sit down as they talked in a jammed dormitory room of their different experiences. Some had been on barricades, others in hospitals. Friends standing next to them had been killed. They all repeated over and over that they never believed this would happen. Some, on hearing the shooting begin, just assumed the army was using rubber bullets. One said he was talking with an acquaintance on a street in the Muxidi area and turned his back when he heard shots, imagining that a stray rubber bullet would hurt less on his back. Then his companion dropped to the ground; a pool of blood formed, and "he died instantly; his eyes were still open."

A few called for revenge. One said that he was a true Marxist and that the time had come for violent revolution. "I can shoot a gun," he said, "I

can throw a grenade fifty meters if I need to." Of course, a successful armed rebellion without the support of a large part of the Chinese army seemed as improbable as this boast. But that did not diminish the intensity of his anger. The rage that seemed to fill the room, more powerful than any I have ever seen, occasionally lapsed into numbness and depression, only to flare again. The young friend for whom I had been searching, just back from spending all night in the hospital, put a black band around my arm. Like others, she kept saying that this repression, this massacre, was unprecedented. What really was unprecedented, however, was the momentum the students' popular protest had gained. Unfortunately, the repression and violence had all too many precedents in China and around the world—though perhaps few had been quite so dramatic. But the immediacy of anger breeds a foreshortening of historical perspective. And it was true that, although the Chinese government had killed its own civilians before (and in much larger numbers), the Communists had never done so in this kind of publicly recorded pitched battle.

At lunch Tuesday in the nearly empty dining hall, breathless students announced that Li Peng had been shot. The story was quite developed: A young man had set out to avenge the death of his girlfriend (or, in one version, his sister) and killed the premier. As more reports arrived it appeared, to widespread disappointment, that the shooting was not fatal (and eventually, of course, that it had not happened at all).

Many people expected the Thirty-eighth Army to move against the Twenty-seventh Army, which had run amok and attacked the city and the students. The Twenty-seventh assumed defensive postures and dug in with extra tanks at major intersections, but there was no military engagement. In fact, the commander of the Thirty-eighth Army had already been relieved of duty and arrested for failure to enforce martial law.⁶² In any case, such fighting would have meant civil war, and it is doubtful that anyone really wanted that. We will probably never know how close it came to unfolding. Amid all this carnage, it occurred to me that a tank battle in Tiananmen would probably mean the destruction of the Forbidden City, perhaps the most important relic of imperial China. It was also suggested that the campuses might be occupied at any time. Such rumors were plausible, though I thought the army probably felt a more pressing need to defend itself against military threat—if or as long as that proved real. At any rate, by Tuesday evening only about 10 percent of the students were left at Beihai. The situation was much the same at Beida and, I am told, elsewhere. A new slogan spread: "Empty the universities." It was designed in part to make the campuses less attractive for military occupation and in part to get

students out of the most obvious places, where they could be rounded up when the repression came. The more hopeful suggested that emptying the Beijing campuses would send "seeds of fire" around the country. Students would tell people the truth, countering government propaganda, perhaps even organizing protests.

I had dinner in a student dining hall with a couple of Ph.D. candidates. Supplies of food were dwindling, hoarding had begun, and many shops were closed. At that time, students bravely assured me that they were not much worried about repression. If it came, they thought, it would take the form not of guns or prison but mainly of bad job assignments or refusal of visas for study abroad. "There are too many of us," they said. Still, wherever I went, people stopped me, nodded at my black armband, and said, "You are very brave." I could never think of a good reply and only mumbled a denial or said it was not I who was brave but the students. What impressed people, I think, was that a non-Chinese, someone who didn't have the same moral obligation they did, someone who could opt out, should care.

Beijing remained tense, and people braced themselves for repression, but now there were more substantial confrontations in other Chinese cities. Indeed, it was only during the first days of repression that those of us involved in or closely observing the movement began to realize how completely our attention had been focused on Beijing. The same was true of the Western press, which acted as though China could be reduced to the capital, with occasional snippets of Shanghai and bustling Guangzhou. But there had been protests around the country. The occupation of Tiananmen Square had gotten national attention, and students flocked from all over China to participate in the great, central event. But after the massacre, the activity outside Beijing assumed more prominence.

Memorial meetings were held across the country, "from Harbin in the north to Guangzhou in the south, and from Shanghai in the east to Lanzhou in the west," according to the Hong Kong newspaper *Ming Pao*.⁶³ Protests and violence were perhaps most extensive in Chengdu. On June 4 the armed police moved violently against demonstrators, killing at least a dozen and possibly many more.⁶⁴ Three buildings were reportedly burned on June 8.⁶⁵ Shanghai was all but shut down for three days. Students from its major universities organized barricades almost immediately after the massacre; the local media reported that 123 intersections were blocked.⁶⁶ Worker militia teams removed the barricades the night of June 6, only to see them replaced the next morning. Most dramatically, a train plowed into a crowd of people and was set ablaze. No satisfactory explanation ever

emerged, though both the government and protesters interpreted the incident as significant. The government cited it as one more bit of evidence of the chaos that made forceful intervention necessary; students thought the government instigated the crash to make precisely that propaganda point. Some claimed the train had carried photos and documentary evidence of the Beijing massacre and that these had been intentionally destroyed by guards when students tried to rescue them from the mail car. The most widespread rumor was that those killed were protesters lying on the tracks in front of the train; after the train rammed into them, other protesters attacked it and set it on fire.⁶⁷ As late as June 9 and 10, Shanghai students were still protesting publicly, holding a memorial service for those killed in Beijing and rallying in front of the Municipal Security Bureau. They were scolded but not attacked. At the same time, however, several members of the Shanghai Autonomous Federation of Trade Unions were arrested, and their organization was declared illegal. On June 15, three of the seven workers charged with burning the train were sentenced to death.⁶⁸

AFTERMATH

By late on June 7 it was clear that China would not endure civil war; whatever tensions may have divided the Thirty-eighth and Twenty-seventh armies—if any—had been resolved. The government began to recompose itself, the hard-liners and their associates consolidating their victory over more liberal Party forces. Still, public protests continued around China and often met with little response from local authorities. By June 9, the Li Peng government had consolidated its authority enough to begin to demand sharper action. Repression now entered a new phase, going beyond the mere crushing of open protest, establishment of "public order," and control of the streets and Tiananmen Square. Students were arrested on campuses, and a "tattletale" hot line was set up for those who wanted to turn in "counterrevolutionaries"; people on the street turned their faces to avoid Western reporters. The apparent leaders of China had themselves filmed, and the footage was broadcast on China Central Television to demonstrate their solidarity and control. Deng Xiaoping delivered a major speech to senior commanders of the martial law troops. "You comrades have been working hard," he began, and after expressing his condolences for their losses he suggested "that all of us stand and pay a silent tribute to the martyrs."⁶⁹ His analysis was simple and recalled the April 26 *People's Daily* editorial: The problem was indeed turmoil; many young students were

well-intentioned though misguided; a minority of bad people mixed with them and manipulated them. This is what made it difficult for the government to know how to act.

Some comrades didn't understand this point. They thought it was simply a matter of how to treat the masses. Actually, what we faced was not just some ordinary people who were misguided, but also a rebellious clique and a large number of the dregs of society. The key point is that they wanted to overthrow our state and the Party. . . . They had two main slogans: to overthrow the Communist Party and topple the socialist system. Their goal was to establish a bourgeois republic entirely dependent on the West.

Slogans about fighting corruption were just a front, Deng continued. This was a test, and the Party passed, thanks to the leadership of so many senior comrades. He concluded, "As determined by the international and domestic climate, it was bound to happen and was independent of man's will. It was just a matter of time and scale."

The scale of arrests undertaken after Deng's speech was massive, though hard to gauge precisely. Perhaps the most distinctive fact is that students were not those most targeted. Although students such as Wang Dan, Chai Ling, and Wuerkaixi topped the government's "most-wanted" list (the first was captured and the latter two escaped to the West), the main repressive effort was directed against workers and ordinary citizens. According to Black and Munro, "Workers, isolated in their workplaces, had fewer connections than anyone, and the BWWF and its counterparts in other cities were the first targets of the post-June 4 crackdown."⁷⁰ The Beijing municipal government announced the arrest of more than four hundred people on June 10. The crackdown was at least as severe, if not more so, outside of Beijing. In Xi'an, for example, the authorities began making arrests around June 11—over two hundred people in a week, including both student leaders and workers.⁷¹

One of the saddest arrests, and the one that most evoked disturbing chapters in China's past, was reported over and over again on television. Zhou Fengsuo, a twenty-year-old physics student at Qinghua University, was apprehended in Xi'an. He was turned in by his sister. The government reported the sister's "honorable" act over and over again, perhaps in the hope of inspiring more such informers but more likely as a moral message in itself. Yet everyone assumed that her action had been coerced, a product of the near-total control the government had over the lives of individuals. At the same time, the events stood out as exceptional. Unlike the Cultural Revolution and other previous campaigns, this crackdown had to be accomplished almost entirely by direct application of military and police power.

Ordinary citizens showed little interest in informing on their neighbors; university deans displayed little desire to punish students; and, most worrisome for the government, the cadres in charge of workplaces carried out only the minimum level of persecution and "rectification" necessary to keep up appearances.

On June 6, government spokesman Yuan Mu had offered an early official version of the military operation. Twenty-three counterrevolutionary thugs and hooligans—some of them possibly students—had died after attacking the People's Liberation Army, sent to keep order in the capital. A thousand soldiers had perished, he said, making one wonder what kind of marvelous Shaolin masters these counterrevolutionaries must have been to inflict with their bare hands such disproportionate damages on heavily armed troops. But by Thursday, June 9, that ratio was not enough. The official media upgraded the official lie: An army general declared that no students had been killed on June 4.

Such extreme untruths never had much chance to work in the West, where television footage was too graphic (even if commentators were imprecise on the details). Neither did they have much potential to persuade citizens of Beijing; too many saw the peaceful protest and the massacre, and too many bullet holes and bloodstains remained. But perhaps the deception was effective in parts of China where news had not flowed very fully and where the Party and PLA retained more authority. Or perhaps the government believed it could repeat the official claims often enough that some of them would eventually seem true even to doubters. In any case, the government gradually developed an official position that acknowledged some deaths but treated them as the by-product of riot and rebellion rather than as massacre.

There was at first some confusion among top officials. It was not a question of whether to protest the official story; none did, at least not openly. Perhaps some covertly signaled their displeasure by dragging their feet slightly in sending congratulatory telegrams to military leaders. But even among those who supported the government's action, there was the question of how to describe it. It took a few weeks to work out the formula. Eventually, Chen Xitong, the mayor of Beijing, published what has become the main, authoritative account of the government's position, a small blue pamphlet entitled *Report on Checking the Turmoil and Quelling the Counter-Revolutionary Rebellion*. It recounts the toll of the final repression:

In the several days of the rebellion, more than 1,280 military vehicles, police cars and public buses were wrecked, burned or otherwise damaged. Of

the vehicles, over 1,000 were military vehicles, more than 60 were armoured personnel carriers and about 30 were police cars. More than 120 public buses were destroyed as well as more than 70 other kinds of motor vehicles. During the same period, arms and ammunition were stolen. More than 6,000 martial law soldiers, armed police and public security officers were injured and the death toll reached several dozens. . . . During the counter-attack, some rioters were killed. Because there were numerous bystanders, some were knocked down by vehicles, some were trampled on or were hit by stray bullets. Some were wounded or killed by ruffians who had seized rifles. According to the information we have so far gathered, more than 3,000 civilians were wounded and over 200, including 36 college students, died during the riot.⁷²

Chen's account is full of specifics, and much of it is accurate, even if one regards it as incomplete and/or misleadingly presented. The government's version of events has come to be called the "Big Lie," a reference to the strategy that a wholesale distortion, by its very audaciousness, may be more successful in redirecting public and historical attention than a series of small untruths, which dissenters would be able to quibble with and perhaps disprove. But the official line is not simply a blatant lie. It is a historical construction, an interpretation of events not altogether different in kind from those that give the student protesters martyrs' crowns or saints' halos.⁷³ It makes sense, within its own frame of reference and evaluation, of a great many accurate empirical claims. It is, however, a construction in which a peaceful protest is a "riot" because it disrupts "public order," which in turn constitutes docile adherence to the wishes of Party leaders. It is a paranoid vision in which the protest can only be explained by the presence of behind-the-scenes organizers who first premeditated turmoil and then exploited it. For example, the enumeration of death and destruction in Chen's *Report on Checking Turmoil* comes in a section headed, "How did the counterrevolutionary rebels injure and kill People's Liberation Armymen?" This passage not only focuses on the harm done to the PLA (rather than to citizens) but also explains how the army suffered such large casualties.

Such heavy losses are eloquent testimony to the restraint and tolerance shown by the martial law troops. The PLA is an army led by the Chinese Communist Party and serves the people whole-heartedly. They are ruthless to the enemy but kind to the people. They were able to defeat the eight million Kuomintang troops armed by US imperialism during the war years and able to defeat US imperialism which was armed to the teeth, and to effectively safeguard the sacred territory and territorial waters and air space of our country. So why did they suffer such great casualties in quelling the counter-revolutionary rebellion? Why were they beaten and even killed,

even when they had weapons in their hands? It is just as Comrade Deng Xiaoping pointed out: "It was because bad people mingled with the good, which made it difficult for us to take the firm measures that were necessary." It also showed that the PLA love the people and are unwilling to injure civilians by accident. The fact that they met death and sacrificed themselves with generosity and without fear fully embodies the nature of the PLA. Otherwise how could there be such a great number of casualties and losses?⁷⁴

This is not a fair account. It is intended to promote a favorable view of the military and the government and to minimize both the killing of civilians and the plausibility of the protest. But as a more or less *complete* interpretation, factual wherever possible, it has much more potential for influencing Chinese popular understandings and history than a simple lie or denial.

Nonetheless, the 1989 student movement showed the limits on the Chinese government's ability to control its own media, let alone the networks of gossip that also shape public opinion. Records of the movement have been archived, and discussions proliferate among exiles. The government's account may have an effect, but it will hardly prevail unchallenged. The protests of 1989 will live in Chinese memory.