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Chasing Liberty: China's Democratic Legacy and the Schism of the
Chinese Communist Party

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Abstract

Despite the seizure of power by the Chinese Communist Party in 1949, Communist China has a long democratic heritage throughout the Communist Era. This paper explores three democratic movements prior to their culmination in 1989, and does not focus on the innumerable smaller protests that individuals and small groups undertook. As time progressed these movements grew larger, more boisterous, and more frequent. The government had been putting these movements down with a relative lack of violence, but as the public yearnings for democracy kept being revived with each movement, something had to be done. Thus, it was only a matter of time before the state violently suppressed democracy in China or democracy made inroads in China. After the violent suppression of the Tiananmen Square protesters in 1989 no subsequent large scale democratic movements have taken hold of China as they used to. With the Tiananmen Square Massacre, China quashed democracy at its source.

Chronology of Events

- May 1 to June 7, 1957: Hundred Flowers Campaign
- 1976-78: Zhao Enlai's death followed by Democracy Wall
- 1986: Student led protest movement erupts, movement put down and leaders punished
- April 15, 1989: Hu Yaobang dies
- April 17: Student-led demonstrations begin
- April 22: Official day of mourning for Hu Yaobang
- May 17: Gorbachev's visit brings greater visibility to the demonstrations, due to world press coverage of Sino-Soviet summit
- May 20: Martial law is declared by the Politburo
- June 3-4: Well armed and well trained troops enter Beijing supported by Armor, seizing Tiananmen Square
- June 9: Deng Xiaoping gives speech denouncing the protests as a counterrevolutionary rebellion, and emphasizing the importance of economic reforms to move China forward

Introduction

Tiananmen Square is the largest public square in the world. To the north is the legendary Gate of Heavenly Peace to the Forbidden City which has been the heart of Imperial China for centuries. To the west of the Imperial seat of power is the communist seat of power: the Great Hall of the People. Opposite the communist seat of government, their legacy is enshrined in the Museum of Chinese History. Finally, surrounding the square at the south end is Mao Zedong Memorial Hall. Tiananmen is an unusual mix of cultural and historical significance. The square has been the heart of China from the days of the Emperors, to the impassioned speeches of Chairman Mao on the Gate of Heavenly Peace. Tiananmen is steeped in history and every modern democracy movement in China has held demonstrations in the square. The place is almost as significant as the movement it contains. If protests were held anywhere else, the few thousand students, who were there openly protesting communist rule in 1989, would not have made the impact they did.

Despite this tradition of democratic protest, it was only a matter of time before the Chinese communist state violently suppressed democracy in China or democracy made inroads in China and weakened the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). After the violent suppression of the Tiananmen Square protesters in 1989, no subsequent large scale democracy movements have gripped China as they used to with some regularity. With the Tiananmen Square Massacre the CCP quashed democracy at its source. This paper focuses on the sudden reversal of state policy from non-violent and clandestine to extremely violent and visible to the entire world. Departing from most scholarship this paper examines previous democratic movements and uses them to paint a picture of the duality of the communist government. This government has consistently

shown itself to support a democratic movement and later suppress it when the movement threatened party control. Even during the 1989 movement two distinct factions of reformers and reactionaries emerged to fight to sway Deng Xiaoping. This paper argues that the violent response to the protests of 1989 as a logical conclusion to the democratic movements that had been building over the decades. The CCP, however reform minded, has always fought and continues to fight to preserve their control over the Chinese state above all else.

At 7:45 on the morning of April 15 1989, Hu Yaobang, a reform minded Chinese official, died. This event would start a chain reaction throughout the Universities of Beijing. To students in Beijing “Hu Yaobang had become something of a hero since he had been made the scapegoat of the 1986 student movement and ousted as general secretary”¹ Indeed student reaction to his death in 1989 suggested a repetition of events of 1976. That year the death of Zhao Enlai sparked outcry and student demonstrations which were suppressed by the government. In 1976 the government began supporting the demonstrations and eventually was forced to suppress it. These events too were an echo of what had gone before. Just as in 1976, the Hundred Flowers movement of 1956 was started and suppressed by Chairman Mao. All these movements were coming to a head in 1989. At that time the figure that stood as a beacon of revolutionary hope was Hu Yaobang. Despite the slow rate with which news traveled in communist China, as soon as students in Peking heard Hu Yaobang was dead they “saw a means of pressuring the government to move more vigorously with economic and democratic reforms.”²

¹ Shen Tong, *Almost a Revolution: The Story of a Chinese Student's Journey from Boyhood to Leadership in Tiananmen Square* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1990), 166.

² Jonathan D Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 739.

By 1989 China was a powder keg. Sitting at the top was the Chinese Communist Party led by Deng Xiaoping. Deng Xiaoping was known as an economic reformer and yet a strict conservative when it came to the party remaining in power. Deng Xiaoping had to keep hard-line conservatives in the party confident that they would not lose power and still maintain his policy of opening China to the West. “To hold this balance,” as historian Jonathan Spence has pointed out, “Deng was willing to sacrifice his friend Hu Yaobang.”³ Deng Xiaoping was walking a tightrope to keep himself in power to move the country forward economically, but by 1989 the spark would come. This spark in the form of Hu Yaobang, would light the fire that had been building in the collective consciousness since 1956 and Mao’s hundred flowers campaign.

Ironically, perhaps, China’s democratic heritage begins with the state sanctioned Hundred Flowers Campaign. After the First Five Year Plan, some of the most powerful members of the CCP, such as Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, the economic planner Chen Yun, the newly appointed secretary-general Deng Xiaoping, and General Lin Biao.⁴ These men came to realize that real progress to a truly modern state was not possible without the support of the Chinese intelligentsia. This first democratic movement had support from all the major players in the Old Guard, and would set a precedent for politicians who would later be known as reformers. The movement, however, was not meant as a fully fledged democracy movement in which people could speak out against the government. Mao described what he wanted from this movement,

a movement of ideological education carried out seriously, yet as gently as a breeze or a mild rain. It should be a campaign of criticism and self-criticism carried to the proper extent. Meetings should be limited to small-sized discussion meetings or group meetings. Comradely heart-to-heart talks in the form of

³ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 727.

⁴ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 567.

conversations, namely exchange of views between individuals, should be used more and large meetings of criticism or 'struggle' should not be held⁵

Mao was not expecting large scale uproar, in fact he condemned it, but he was also not oblivious to the criticism that was coming. He encouraged it as long as there was no threat to party strength and unity. Indeed, party unity and control of China is the most important thing to the Communist party since their seizure of power. After universities and students all over the country seized this opportunity to push for educational and democratic reform, Mao was forced to suppress the movement which he fought so hard to begin. However, in 1957 the protests were not put down by a bloody and public engagement between peaceful protesters and the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The government's form of retribution was blacklisting the most prominent intellectuals in the country, "by the end of the year, over 300,000 intellectuals had been branded 'rightists,' a label that effectively ruined their careers in China."⁶ This stunted the growth of the country by taking the best and the brightest China had to offer and forced them to join the commendable peasantry and fall into obscurity. However, the suppression was not an organized bloody struggle between professional soldiers and civilians. This movement was encouraged by the government and the highest ranking members of the CCP, but when the people took advantage of the freedoms given to them, they were punished. This did nothing but suppress the democratic sentiments until a later date, and it did not quash them for long.

Twenty years later on April 4, 1976, thousands gathered in Tiananmen Square to mourn Zhou Enlai. Zhou has been a part of the CCP since its inception, and had been instrumental in the Communist rise to power in China. Therefore, his death was a significant event for the average Chinese citizen who had lived with Zhou's cult of personality for decades. Zhou was seen as a

⁵ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 570.

⁶ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 572.

benevolent politician who looked out for the citizens and was greatly missed. Mourners were beaten and forced out of the square by police and thousands of city militia called in to clear the square. Two years later, Deng Xiaoping, while trying to move China forward with his Four Modernizations, in agriculture, industry, national defense, and the linked areas of science and technology, reversed the verdicts condemning these protests.⁷ In effect Deng was perceived by Chinese citizens at the time, as sanctioning this behavior giving fuel to more protests in 1978. This along with the general feeling of openness created by Deng Xiaoping served only to create an environment where a frank discussion of democratic rights was going to occur.

In December of 1978, people began to express their beliefs in posters denouncing the government and asking for democracy. The most famous venue for these expressions was a stretch of blank wall just to the west of the Forbidden City, part of which housed a cluster of residences for China's most senior national leaders.⁸ This wall came to be known as Democracy Wall and was covered in posters and poems and other writings asking for a Fifth Modernization in the area of democracy. By mid-January the government had had enough. Scholars theorize that early on in this movement Deng was lenient, because he agreed with the sentiments the protesters and writers expressed. Both wanted modernization and openness and at first Deng's enemies were being targeted by the dissenters. However, where the dissenters and Deng differed was Deng would never relinquish power for the CCP. As Spence notes, "Deng's actions ran parallel to Mao's in 1957, when Mao unleashed the anti-rightist campaign in order to smother the Hundred Flowers movement that he had just set in motion."⁹ In 20 years, two democracy

⁷ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 654.

⁸ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 660.

⁹ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 664.

movements had been suppressed by leaders who at first appeared to support the movement, although neither protest was violently suppressed by units of the PLA.

The mid 1980s was a time of reform led by Deng Xiaoping to achieve his Four Modernizations. These modernizations would open China to the modern world. To give an idea of the difference in times, when the Standing Committee of the Politburo held a photo-shoot for the international press,

For the first time in memory, the entire Standing Committee appeared in Western attire, their Mao suits stashed away for this photo op aimed at telling the developed West that China was comfortable on stage. When a reporter commented on Zhao's [Ziyang] impressive double-breasted pinstripe suit, Zhao, with a big grin, playfully pulled open the jacket to show off a lapel that indicated: made in China. A new era seemed to be at hand.¹⁰

China was opening up and establishing itself as a modern state in the world. The CCP was breaking ties with the Maoist era in favor of Western ways and the modernization of the economy. The failed Great Leap Forward was being left behind for actual great leaps in economic productivity. A general feeling of openness prevailed, and with that, the atmosphere of China was changing and the people could feel it. By 1986 economic reforms were the glue keeping the government together. To remain legitimate the CCP under Deng championed economic modernization and greater prosperity for Chinese people. This emphasis on economic growth gave more power to the intelligentsia who were capable of delivering new programs for growth and prosperity, and thus “intellectuals and students were offered a greater stake in China's future than had

¹⁰ Bao Pu, Renee Chiang, and Adi Ignatius, *Prisoner of the State: the Secret Journal of Premier Zhao Ziyang* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009), preface ix-x.

previously been the case.”¹¹ In the 1980s, intellectuals, and students especially, began to exercise their new freedoms. Calling for democratic reforms, students took to the streets in this air of new openness and were supported by well known student organizers. After the government suppressed the protests and purged these well known figures, the state had one last thing to deal with. Instead of abandoning economic reforms and thereby taking away people’s new found freedoms, Deng Xiaoping, to appease hardliners, needed a scapegoat from high in the government. Hu Yaobang was blamed for mishandling the student protests, “Hu’s outspokenness on the need for rapid reform and his almost open contempt of Maoist excesses had made him a controversial leader of the party.”¹² After Hu’s ousting Zhao Ziyang took over his position as secretary-general.

Once again the atmosphere created by the government was advantageous for political reform, or at least political dialogue. This movement was not state sanctioned, but was a natural continuation of the reforms CCP leaders were championing. The events of the winter of 1986 were a direct result of government policy and rhetoric. Students and the intellectuals of Beijing have always played a prominent role in political discourse in China and these student protests were nothing out of the ordinary. What made the demonstrations of the mid 1980’s significant was the fact that a public sacrifice was offered to the conservative wing of the CCP in the form of Hu Yaobang. The dismissal of Hu Yaobang illustrates the dichotomy of the CCP and the clash between the old guard conservatives and the new guard (Deng Xiaoping the new guard reformer was over 80 years old at the time) reformers led by men like Hu Yaobang and Zhao Zihyang. Deng

¹¹Tony Saich, ed., *The Chinese People’s Movement: Perspectives on Spring 1989* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1990), 30.

¹² Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 726.

Xiaoping as supreme leader, at that time, had to balance his beliefs of opening China to the world economy and promoting free enterprise in a developing middle class, with the paramount belief that the CCP must remain in total control of the Chinese state. These two belief systems represent the two factions under Deng, who equally represented both hard-liners and reformers that emerged after Mao's death.

Thus after the dust cleared in 1987 Hu Yaobang, an avid reformer, was made scapegoat for his handling of the student movements. The political atmosphere of China had not changed significantly, and the stage was set for all the democratic yearnings to come to a head in a mass student protest. All that was needed was a spark to ignite the flame.

Historiography

Scholarship on the democratic heritage of China stretches back for 50 years since the inception of the Communist regime, but for several reasons cannot always address the topic in depth. Strict censorship in Communist China restricts inquiry of its government and of the people to inquire. The fact that this paper also covers a moment in Chinese history, which the current government actively tries to conceal from its people, does not help. If China is not the source of scholarship then what, or more precisely, who is? The main source of primary and secondary sources written by native Chinese come from exiles that were hated by the communist regime in China and forced to immigrate to the United States, and some earlier willing immigrants to America before the incident. These authors have a good education from either prestigious Chinese or American universities. The role of the general Chinese populace is lost in these sources and their thoughts and opinions must be taken from secondary sources written by outside observers to the Massacre.

Sources concerning the Tiananmen Square Massacre are written by a small group of experts who have strong emotional ties to the subject. These works are written while the wound is still fresh. A bias will always be present due to the lack of native Chinese sources supportive of the government and the time period in which most scholars are writing. With a massacre fresh in their minds the authors were writing as a catharsis. In *The Legacy of Tiananmen: China in Disarray*, James Miles argues from 1997, “that Deng’s gambit has paid off only in the short term and that while China has changed in many important ways it is, if anything, less stable than it was in the buildup to the unrest of 1989.”¹³ He is part of this deeply affected group of authors

¹³ James, Miles, *The Legacy of Tiananmen: China in Disarray* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 4.

writing from soon after the event, because he was in China from 1986 to 1994 and, despite the fact he is writing in 1997, his experiences from the time are the main source of information along with interviews conducted during his time in China. Miles does not write in the detached overall style of later scholars. His school of thought was dominated by scholars who believed the Chinese government could not maintain power only with an iron fist. These scholars who wrote directly following the incident took a vested interest in the massacre and their emotion comes through in their writing. Perhaps this emotion clouded their judgments when they concluded the Chinese communist government would not last forever and the masses would use Tiananmen to seize more democratic power, revealing a bias towards the students and their power to influence the government.

In the chaos following the massacre scholars writing about Tiananmen believed the government would be deposed. Miles does argue that the Massacre offered a look at facets of the Chinese state we were rarely privy to prior to 1989: “the mood of the public, the workings of one of the most secretive political parties in the world, and the personalities of Chinese leaders were briefly illuminated before the veil was once again drawn.”¹⁴ Miles’ writing offers a different view of the events, because he is unable to detach himself, and he is not able to witness the reforms that come directly following the Massacre come to fruition in the coming decades culminating in the present day. The sources written at this time are the most reliable sources of facts, but least reliable for conclusions and for the legacy of Tiananmen.

A year after the massacre Cheng Chu-yuang, wrote *Behind the Tiananmen Massacre: Social, Political, and Economic Ferment in China*. This source is a far departure from Miles’ style and

¹⁴ Miles, *The Legacy of Tiananmen*, 4.

focus. Indeed he, explicitly states that he is not looking at what happened, but rather why it happened. This source is from the time directly following Tiananmen, but this source's purpose is not to simply demonize the government in his recount of what happened. Two important questions, which many scholars ask, form Cheng's argument: "Why did China's hard line leaders choose to attack peaceful demonstrators and citizens?"¹⁵ And "why did Deng Xiaoping, whose pragmatic policies had won him worldwide acclaim, decide to destroy in one day much of what he had accomplished in a whole decade?"¹⁶ These questions are a recurring theme in Tiananmen scholarship. The main question most scholars try to answer is why the government decided this movement required a very violent response. For older democracy movements the government only blacklisted, imprisoned, exiled, or very rarely executed. If execution did occur, only leaders were killed, and only a few of those leaders would be dealt with in this manner. Admittedly until 1989 Deng Xiaoping, up until this point, had been a benevolent leader who had twice been *TIME Magazine's* man of the year. He was wildly popular in the US and on June 3 he threw that all away. These questions are fundamental questions that almost every scholar tries to answer when studying Tiananmen.

In 1994 and 1995, scholarship on Tiananmen reached a high point. At this time, a group of scholars wrote, co-wrote and co-edited, and collected essays as a sort of collective project on Tiananmen and what followed in China. Out of this optimistic new era of scholarship came Edward Friedman's *National Identity and Democratic Prospects in Socialist China*. Friedman asks "is there a glue of common values or goals or a worldview that holds the Chinese people together as one nation. If there is not then how long can that dictatorial, overly centralized

¹⁵ Chu-Yuan Cheng, *Behind the Tiananmen Massacre: Social, Political, and Economic Ferment in China*. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), 5.

¹⁶ Chu-Yuan Cheng, *Behind the Tiananmen Massacre*, 5.

regime survive?”¹⁷ The central question asked was: “If not long, what is likely to replace it?”¹⁸ This epitomizes the trend in the years directly following the massacre. Will the communists survive this event? This wave of scholarship is optimistic about democracy in China and does not put much faith into the economic reforms to come. This mid 90s school mostly looks at the future of China and how Tiananmen has affected it. This school does not necessarily examine the events of Tiananmen, but rather the repercussions of the massacre. This is a departure from the early 90s and 1989 scholarship which strove to give a clear image of what actually happened. This school strives to predict what will happen, and these scholars are, for the most part, optimistic about the future of democracy in China in contrast to modern scholars like Béja. Henceforth, modern scholars know the effectiveness with which the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has contained any protests and dissent. However in the mid nineties, China was in transition and democracy did not seem far off. These sources are useful examinations of the legacy of Tiananmen.

Jean-Philippe Béja, a French scholar and part of this modern school, argues in “China Since Tiananmen: The Massacre’s Long Shadow,” that first the massacre created a general feeling in the CCP that staying in power was paramount and anyone stepping out of line was a threat to party unity and the agenda. The breakup and failure of the USSR only helped to strengthen this belief; “the CCP’s urge to close ranks and stay united is among the key legacies of 4 June 1989.”¹⁹ If the CCP gave in to the democracy movements they would surely lose power and territory. Béja also argues that after uniting the party, the massacre also led Deng

¹⁷Friedman, Edward, *National Identity and Democratic Prospects in Socialist China* (New York: East Gate Books, 1995), xi.

¹⁸ Friedman, *National Identity and Democratic Prospects in Socialist China*, xi.

¹⁹ Jean-Philippe Béja, “China Since Tiananmen: The Massacre’s Long Shadow,” *Journal of Democracy* 20, no. 3 (2009): 6.

Xiaoping to begin economic reforms in 1992 to try to placate the revolutionary groups into the CCP. By offering students and the intelligentsia the opportunity to get rich, the CCP was able to defuse any attempts at another student led democracy movement; in short, the Party had decided to co-opt the most problematic social categories, the ones that had been at the forefront of the democracy movement.”²⁰ Related to this, Béja argues that the peasants were not placated but rather contained, “The absence over the last two decades of any large-scale social movement comparable to the democracy movement of the late 1980s is in no small part a testament to the effectiveness of the regime’s dogged protest-containment efforts.”²¹ Since the massacre, protests on these small local levels are dealt with quickly and quietly with the goal being to keep the protest from growing beyond anything than a local dispute. Attempts by peasants to unionize or organize are met immediately with suppression, and few rewards and benefits are offered as opposed to the rich entrepreneur class receiving much of the pork from the government.²² Finally, Béja argues that a new human-rights amendment added to the constitution passed by the CCP, which lawyers have used to protect the civil rights of citizens against abusive party officials, illustrates the desire of Chinese citizens to have more civil rights gradually, instead of sweeping reform in another grassroots movement like 1989.²³ Béja cites one Chinese citizen, Xu Zhiyong, who has, “respect for those who raised human-rights issues in the past, but now we hope to work in a constructive way within the space afforded by the legal system. Concrete but gradual change—I think that’s what most Chinese people want.”²⁴ Béja concludes with the belief that no democracy movement on the scale of 1989 is possible in the near future. However,

²⁰ Béja, “China Since Tiananmen: The Massacre’s Long Shadow,” 7.

²¹ Béja, “China Since Tiananmen: The Massacre’s Long Shadow,” 8.

²² Béja, “China Since Tiananmen: The Massacre’s Long Shadow,” 8.

²³ Béja, “China Since Tiananmen: The Massacre’s Long Shadow,” 13-14.

²⁴ Béja, “China Since Tiananmen: The Massacre’s Long Shadow,” 14.

the Chinese citizens' enthusiasm for the new civil protections in the constitution suggests the CCP is not as strong as it once was. Béja is offering a new perspective from the early 90s scholarship which predicted an even larger democratic movement in response to the Tiananmen Square Massacre, or a social movement in response to this violent suppression. Béja is blessed with hindsight, he predicts no sweeping social change, and instead he emphasizes the effective Chinese suppression of peasant protests and the ineffectiveness of exiled intelligentsia. He does not ignore the current forms of dissent, but in comparison to the 1989 Democracy Movement these small petitions are nothing in his opinion. Despite being the largest form of dissent expressed in years these petitions sponsored by dissenting elites only number in the thousands in a country of one billion.²⁵ Obviously the events of 1989 had a great effect on the common people of China to suppress their belief in a democratic future. A population, who once regularly held large scale democratic protests, now had little motivation.

Finally, an outlier in scholarship, not fitting into any other group is Timothy Brook. In *Quelling the People: The Military Suppression of the Beijing Democracy Movement*, Brook argues that "there was no turmoil in Beijing until the Chinese government created it. The military violence unleashed in the streets of the capital did more to heighten the turmoil than to quell it."²⁶ Brook goes on to say the People's Liberation Army's actions in Beijing were an act of war against the protesters in Tiananmen Square and large amounts of casualties were unavoidable at that point. A massacre was occurring and the massacre was being conducted by the Chinese government.²⁷ Brook admits that he has no evidence from the officials in the Chinese government, however he examines the actions of the army on June 4th and according to

²⁵ Béja, "China Since Tiananmen: The Massacre's Long Shadow," 13.

²⁶ Brook, *Quelling the People*, 5.

²⁷ Brook, *Quelling the People*, 5

him; “what the Army did reveals a great deal about what the Party wanted to do.”²⁸ Brook examines the actions of the army to cut through the official accounts which offer no help in figuring out what happened on June 4, 1989, because these official documents are meant to protect the government from any wrongdoing that may have occurred. Brook creates a logical argument from the facts of the massacre. His first undisputed fact is: “assault troops slaughtered civilians.”²⁹ This is a simple fact there is no disputing that soldiers killed civilians on June 4th.

Brook tries to deal with the main problem of Tiananmen Square Massacre scholarship in an interesting way. No one disputes the actions of the Army. But despite the fact that his arguments cannot be proven without corroborating official evidence, Brook has pieced together a people’s history of the Army’s actions through eyewitness accounts. Thus Brook’s main source of evidence is interviews with eyewitnesses and study of published eyewitness accounts.³⁰ Brook creates a history of the event constructed by the accounts of dozens of people who were there, instead of the leaders who were controlling the circumstances. The reason for this is that he is denied access to official political leaders accounts, but those circumstances allow Brook to create a vivid people’s history instead of a detached history about only those in charge.

Brook speaks about classified documents that he will most likely never see in his lifetime, and Béja refers to recently declassified accounts which offer supporting evidence for him. Obviously, in the 10 years since Brook’s work and even in the 3 years since Béja facts have changed and the climate in China has changed and defused. Brook was writing in 1992

²⁸ Brook, *Quelling the People*, 6.

²⁹ Brook, *Quelling the People*, 6.

³⁰ Brook, *Quelling the People*, 5.

when the economic reforms of Deng Xiaoping were beginning to take place, while Béja was writing in 2009 when those reforms had come to fruition and created a Chinese superpower.

One secondary source that epitomizes the issues with Tiananmen scholarship is Jonathan Spence's *The Search for Modern China*. Spence presents the history of modern China from the fall of the Ming Dynasty to the Tiananmen Square Massacre. The fact that his history ends with Tiananmen and offers little context for the reader, illustrates the lack of depth afforded to Tiananmen when authors attempt to examine the entirety of China's democratic heritage.

Béja uses a more official approach backed up by the political leaders of China and their official accounts, and the accounts of the exiled student leaders and intelligentsia. Brook, by necessity, uses interviews, but the two differences in sources are caused by the differences in scholarship. Béja examines a wide scope of political dissent in China, while Brook is trying to piece together an accurate account to June 4, 1989. The two scholars are driven by different motivations. Spence has no clear agenda and writes about centuries before Tiananmen. The historiography is diverse relating to Tiananmen. From highly emotional sources written directly following the incident, to scholarship written at present day with the gift of hindsight decades after the massacre, the quantity of writing has tapered off since China has emerged as a superpower, and the economic opening of China has occurred. Now more recent scholarship focuses on the economic aspect of China rather than their lack of democracy. It seems that the smoke and mirrors the CCP used to placate the Chinese people have also worked on the scholars who write about China. Scholars mostly relegate Tiananmen to an afterthought as perhaps a catalyst for their well documented economic reforms, but Tiananmen no longer commands the scholarship it once did. Over time scholars on China have forgotten the great importance

Tiananmen holds and this paper reestablishes this importance and argues Tiananmen was the great culmination of democratic movements in China which would never take hold of China again. This fact gives even more importance to the Tiananmen Square Massacre.

The Spark to Ignite the Flame: The Death of Hu Yaobang

By 1989 Chinese students and teachers were waiting for an opportunity to bring democracy to the forefront once again. The general feelings of dissatisfaction were still prevalent among the educated class that strove for more political freedoms in China. A demonstration was expected on May 4th to commemorate the May Fourth Movement of 1919. The May Fourth Movement was in response to the Treaty of Versailles, giving Japan control of confiscated German holdings on mainland China, and as Tony Saich claims, “during the weeks that followed the first arrests of student protesters, the May Fourth Movement grew into a struggle that surpassed all previous Chinese youth movements in terms of size and scope.”³¹ The May Fourth Movement became a symbol in communist China as the CCP was formed in response to this event. May Fourth resonated through the decades and was called upon to give more meaning to later protests.

Student organizations were set to start demonstrations commemorating May Fourth. However, on April 15, 1989 Hu Yaobang, who had become a hero to the students had a heart attack and died. It took only hours for students to fill the streets and cover the walls of Beijing with pro-democracy posters.³² Rumor has it that his heart attack had come about while arguing for reform at a Politburo meeting.³³ Hu Yaobang’s death was the opportunity that the students needed to begin demonstrations, as Tony Saich has argued “when the students staged demonstrations that simultaneously honored Hu’s memory and raised criticisms of contemporary

³¹ Saich, ed., *The Chinese People’s Movement*, 8.

³² Craig Calhoun, *Niether Gods nor Emperors: Students and the Struggle for Democracy in China* (London: University of California Press, 1994), 1.

³³ Saich, ed., *The Chinese People’s Movement*, 33.

authorities, they were following in a well-established tradition of using funerary rites to express a renewed commitment to political change.”³⁴ From the very beginning the students were drawing on memories of May Fourth 1919. At the same time they were tapping into the strategies used back in 1976 when mourners used Zhao Enlai’s death to begin a political discussion. The protests of 1989 had a deep collective history which the students were evoking with their choice of time and place for their demonstrations. The protests were not new and pioneering in their origins, but over the course of the movement they would become the largest most polarizing demonstrations to face China.

The demonstrations grew out of humble origins. News traveled by word of mouth at first and was very hard to corroborate. One student leader who would help shape these small protests into a more organized student movement was Shen Tong. Shen at the time was a student at Beijing University or Beida, and was known as an activist for years before 1989. In his memoir *Almost a Revolution: The Story of a Chinese Student’s Journey from Boyhood to Leadership in Tiananmen Square*, Shen describes the initial reaction of the students to Hu’s death. On April 17, Shen Tong asked one of his colleagues if anyone had gone to Tiananmen yet, “Sheng Pei didn’t know, but two of the Olympic Institute members, who had ridden their bicycles to the square, told us that a lot of students were gathering there and some were staying overnight.”³⁵ Immediately Tiananmen is the focal point for the protests, despite the fact that at this early stage there was little organization among the students and the lack of communication between university campuses was hard to overcome. Each campus became its own hub of information. The most important of these was the Triangle Area at Beijing University. Here “students set up a

³⁴ Saich, ed., *The Chinese People’s Movement*, 7.

³⁵ Shen Tong, *Almost a Revolution*, 168.

communications center the morning of April 22 with a homemade amplifier and two speakers.”³⁶ The Triangle and the “broadcast center,” which some dispute even had broadcast capabilities, served a much greater purpose. Students from all over Beijing came to hear the broadcasts, which blared all day and night to keep their audience informed of the situation in Beijing and around China.

At this stage the students were not a movement, and had no overlying hierarchal organization. What existed was a loose confederacy of university campuses struggling to even learn current events, and student leaders writing to educate anyone who would listen. These universities would eventually unite into a more comprehensive movement, but in the early stages no concrete organization was present, and no clear message abounded. The government was not dealing with a student led movement threatening their regime at this point. Before and directly after the death of Hu Yaobang, dissent was more prevalent in the country’s intellectuals, who take more active leadership in these democratic movements. The government had been struggling with the role of intellectuals in China since the era of Mao. The central dilemma was how to pursue a never ending revolution emphasizing the importance of the peasants, while still cultivating a modernized economy with the help of the bourgeoisie.

This duality has plagued the intellectual community for the entirety of the communist reign. After the Hundred Flowers campaign, over 300,000 intellectuals were branded “rightists,” and forced to be reeducated in the fields out of the government’s way.³⁷ This was the first in a long string of injustices against the intellectuals in China. By the 1980s, the intellectuals had been mistreated for decades, but a new need for them had arisen with the elevation of Deng

³⁶ Calhoun, *Niether Gods nor Emperors*, 45.

³⁷ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 572.

Xiaoping to absolute leader, and his emphasis on modernization. With this new need for qualified, skilled individuals to run a modern economy, and project China onto the world's stage, the intellectuals were given more freedom and respect under Deng Xiaoping. This backfired for the government in 1986, "as intellectuals gained in stature and numbers, they began to gain confidence and to push for further liberalizations or even to attack the government,"³⁸ and once again in 1989. These early dilemmas on what to do with the intellectuals immobilized the Chinese government, "they seemed to hope the protests would be easier to contain after they had run their course. Reform-oriented leaders in particular wanted to avoid alienating students and intellectuals any further."³⁹ Chinese leaders, from the beginning, were sending mixed messages, illustrating the inconsistencies in the policy of the CCP. A clear division between reform-minded leaders and hard-line conservative leaders existed and would be brought to the forefront in the early days of the protest.

On April 17, just two days after the death of Hu Yaobang, a student organizer led a group of students to the National People's Congress with seven demands, "restore Hu Yaobang's reputation; end the Anti-Bourgeois Liberalism Campaign; guarantee a free press, free speech, and the right to peaceful demonstrations; increase the budget for education; and end official corruption."⁴⁰ This list of demands is a clear use of Hu Yaobang's death to start a wider dialogue on democracy. This strategy left the Chinese central government unable to quash the protests right away. The students were honoring a high ranking government official, keeping with a long tradition. However, "this was, after all, China's third substantial 'prodemocracy'

³⁸ Calhoun, *Niether Gods nor Emperors*, 13.

³⁹ Calhoun, *Niether Gods nor Emperors*, 37.

⁴⁰ Shen Tong, *Almost a Revolution*, 169.

movement in a decade.”⁴¹ The government was not completely immobilized by these events and tensions were high between police and protesters around Xinhuaamen, the entrance to the Zhongnanhai compound. Immediately after Hu’s death the protests started small with only a thousand or so students occupying Tiananmen or Zhongnanhai, the compound just off Tiananmen Square which is the home of most high-ranking Chinese officials. With officials essentially under house arrest, a clash was certain to occur. Five days after the initial outbreak of protests, on April 20 “at 2:30 in the morning the police, without warning, had beaten the students in front of Xinhuaamen with leather belts and billy clubs.”⁴² Craig Calhoun, an American student in China at the time, witnessed this first violent incident between the police and students, which sent shockwaves through the universities. This incident galvanized the students and invigorated them with renewed enthusiasm.

With these violent incidents, students abandoned the idea that moderate political reform was possible and turned to more radical beliefs and more radical actions against the government. Multiple sources agree that, “indeed, much of the momentum of the protests was provided by insults, injuries, and threats from the government.”⁴³ Tensions were running high and the government had to respond. Officials had ignored the protests so far, but with officials under siege at their place of residence and work, the protesters had to be placated in some way. Eventually the government scheduled an official day of mourning for Hu Yaobang. April 22 the ceremony took place, but demonstrations were forbidden and the government cordoned off Tiananmen Square. However, students were prepared for this reaction and entered the square

⁴¹ Calhoun, *Niether Gods nor Emperors*, 38.

⁴² Shen Tong, *Almost a Revolution*, 176.

⁴³ Calhoun, *Niether Gods nor Emperors*, 40.

before the police had manned their posts.⁴⁴ Measures created to placate the protesters led to the largest demonstrations yet. This was the end of the government's ability to contain the movement and maintain control with traditional means of suppression. If armed riot police could not dissuade protesters from occupying the square, the government had to ask what would. This initial inability to suppress the movement with traditional means, would force the government to turn to harsher measures to clear the square. The government was forced to have these memorial ceremonies, and even when the state tried to control the demonstrations that were sure to accompany the memorial for Hu, the CCP was unable to maintain control of the most important place in China, and their own seat of governance. Shows of force only invigorated the protests and appeasing the protesters only gave the students an opportunity to further demonstrate on a larger scale. The memorial crowd ballooned to over 100,000 people.⁴⁵ This was the largest protest so far and the circumstances involving the blatant disregard for police authority elicited another official response, or rather, another blunder that would cost the government even more support and push the demonstrations to become a full fledged movement.

⁴⁴ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 740.

⁴⁵ Sources disagree on the total number of protesters, so the exact number is impossible to pinpoint, but 100,000 is a conservative estimate, as one source puts the total at 200,000.

Turmoil in the Politburo

Zhao Ziyang, along with many other Chinese officials, was purged during the Cultural Revolution by the fanatical Red Guards in 1965.⁴⁶ In 1971 Zhao was put on a plane to Beijing with no explanation and was brought to meet Zhao Enlai and made deputy chief of Inner Mongolia, “Zhao later learned that Chairman Mao himself had been responsible for his return from political exile. Mao one day had suddenly asked an attendant, “Whatever happened to Zhao Ziyang?”⁴⁷ That is the nature of the Chinese political system. The supreme leader has control over the entire party and can propel anyone to a high position making them one of the most influential politicians in the country, or the supreme leader can exile anyone at their discretion. Chairman Mao was the cause of Zhao’s exile and with one comment from him; Zhao was propelled back into the spotlight. After Mao’s death he was replaced by Deng Xiaoping as the supreme leader of the CCP. Deng had all the power of Mao, but Deng preferred to run the country from behind the scenes. Deng had to appease the conservatives while executing economic modernization all without the cult of personality, which helped to make Mao the undisputed leader of the CCP, and command the hearts and minds of the Chinese people. The careful balance that Deng Xiaoping was able to maintain was tenuous to say the least.

After the democratic protests of 1986, Hu Yaobang, Deng’s apparent successor, was ousted from positions of power for being too lenient on the students and letting the movement

⁴⁶The Cultural Revolution was an attempt by Chairman Mao to reemphasize the revolutionary spirit that he saw as diminishing. “Redness,” or revolutionary fervor, was emphasized over all else. Chairman Mao energized the Chinese young people, which resulted in the ousting of many officials and intellectuals, and thousands of deaths.

⁴⁷Bao Pu, Renee Chiang, and Adi Ignatius, *Prisoner of the State*, preface xiii. This work is the collection of voice recordings made by Zhao Ziyang during his house arrest. The editors collected these recordings distributed to Zhao’s friends and family in secret, and provide notes to give context throughout the book at the beginning of each chapter to introduce just what Zhao is talking about in each recording session. These recordings are Zhao’s explanations of his actions during the Tiananmen protests and his subsequent ousting.

get out of hand. Hu's position of general secretary was taken over by Zhao Ziyang at first on a temporary basis until a replacement could be found, but eventually he would become the permanent General Secretary by 1989.

The final member of the important triumvirate in 1989 was Li Peng the Premier of China at the time. Li Peng in 1989 is clearly vying for Deng's favor and the power that comes with it. In 1988 inflation is on the rise and Zhao Ziyang's position looks fragile to Li Peng. Li Peng begins to campaign against him in meetings by voicing criticisms of Zhao and his economic policies. However as Zhao recollects, "When Li Peng explained the incident to Deng Xiaoping, Deng has revealed his intentions, which was to stand by me [Zhao Ziyang]. He asked them to support me as well."⁴⁸ This conflict would continue, however, and define the government response to the protests. Li Peng and Zhao Ziyang had to fight to convince Deng Xiaoping of their respective points of view. Li Peng representing the conservative hard-liners, and Zhao Ziyang representing the reform minded politicians in the CCP. Whoever could curry the most favor would institute their beliefs. This conflict between the two most powerful leaders in China for the favor of the supreme leader will shape the government's response to the protests in Tiananmen.

With Deng standing by Zhao's policies, Zhao Ziyang was the obvious favorite from the very beginning of his term. With Hu gone, Zhao was the chosen successor to Deng Xiaoping. According to Zhao, Deng offered to retire and give his position as Chairman of the Central Military Commission to Zhao saying, "If I did that, you could do your job better."⁴⁹ Deng was willing to hand over his last official position to give Zhao more authority and further his policies.

⁴⁸ Bao Pu, Renee Chiang, and Adi Ignatius, *Prisoner of the State*, 56.

⁴⁹ Bao Pu, Renee Chiang, and Adi Ignatius, *Prisoner of the State*, 56.

It was clear that if Li Peng wanted power, it would have to be at Zhao's expense. Before the protests, Deng was clearly thinking about the continuing reformation of China, and handing the reins over to Zhao to continue his economic policies. This would change over the course of the protests.

Zhao Ziyang recalls the protests as legal and a natural reaction to Hu Yaobang's death. He believed if the government was holding official memorial services, then mourning is natural and should be allowed. He dismissed the students gathered outside Xinhuaamen, as most had already left, and the unruly ones were dealt with by police. After the memorial demonstrations for Hu Yaobang, Zhao Ziyang saw no future for the protests and thought it was time for the students to go back to class. He offered a three point strategy to the Standing Committee of the Politburo to deal with the students.

1. With the memorial service now over, social activities should return to normal. Students need to be persuaded to discontinue their street demonstrations and return to their classes.
2. According to the principal goal of reducing tensions, dialogue should be conducted at multiple levels, and through various channels and formats to establish mutual understanding and to seek a variety of opinions. Whatever opinions they held, all students, teachers and intellectuals should be allowed to express themselves freely.
3. Bloodshed must be avoided, no matter what. However, those who engaged in the five kinds of behavior—beating, smashing, looting, burning, and trespassing—should be punished according to law.⁵⁰

This three point plan was adopted by the Standing Committee with no opposition, and with Deng Xiaoping in agreement. On April 23 Zhao Ziyang was scheduled to leave for his state visit to North Korea. That fact that this trip was not called off with the protests going on is evidence that the government was in agreement with Zhao's assessment. The protests were

⁵⁰ Bao Pu, Renee Chiang, and Adi Ignatius, *Prisoner of the State*, 6.

winding down and had run their course. The students should go back to class and dialogue would be started with them. Most importantly peaceful protests were protected under Zhao's plan. Zhao left the country with a clear outline for response to these protests. If there was any doubt in his mind that there would be complications, he would not have left the country at such a volatile time, but with a sense of normalcy returning, Zhao left for North Korea with his three point plan as the policy of the Standing Committee.

With Zhao out of the country, the hard-liners opposed to his reforms took action. They began to turn Deng Xiaoping against the protests and Zhao's policies of appeasement and inaction. Zhao has carelessly failed to see this coming, and was now in Pyongyang until the 30th of April. The night after Zhao left for North Korea, April 23, Li Peng called a meeting of the Standing Committee as he was now temporarily in charge of the Standing Committee with Zhao's absence.⁵¹ Zhao would later learn, in this meeting, "with Li Peng presiding, Li Ximing and Chen Xitong vigorously presented the student demonstrations as a grave situation. They disregarded the fact that the student demonstrations had already calmed down."⁵² The student body was divided and many students were already resuming classes and only a minority was continuing the protests. These students were obviously dissatisfied, and Zhao believed "if measures were to be taken to reduce tensions, to have dialogue, and to allow students the chance to propose certain reasonable requests, this was a good time to do so."⁵³ This truly was a missed opportunity to end the mass demonstrations and address the small group of activist students still demonstrating against the government. This is the turning point in the entire series of events; Zhao agrees that, "the scale of the demonstrations, the mess it turned into and why it happened

⁵¹ Bao Pu, Renee Chiang, and Adi Ignatius, *Prisoner of the State*, 9.

⁵² Bao Pu, Renee Chiang, and Adi Ignatius, *Prisoner of the State*, 9.

⁵³ Bao Pu, Renee Chiang, and Adi Ignatius, *Prisoner of the State*, 9.

when it did were all the results of the April 26 editorial.”⁵⁴ The *People’s Daily* was a state owned and operated newspaper which the government’s views could be articulated to the millions of Chinese citizens in this paper’s circulation. This editorial was seen as the official government policy regarding the protests published in one of their official publications.

If Zhao had been in the country, Li Peng would not have had the one on one time with Deng Xiaoping to convince him of the maliciousness of the student protests. The day before the editorial was published, Li Peng and the President of China met with Deng Xiaoping to relate to him what the Standing Committee had discussed. This meeting is when Deng Xiaoping, who “had always tended to prefer tough measures when dealing with students demonstrations because he believed that demonstrations undermined stability,”⁵⁵ was swayed from his original belief in Zhao’s plan of actions, which he agreed to just six days earlier. Deng Xiaoping was by no means a wishy-washy puppet who adopted the views of whichever person talked to him last. Deng Xiaoping was merely an octogenarian who had seen students get out of hand multiple times before and had suppressed multiple student movements to maintain his power and his tenuous alliance between the hard-liners and the reformers. Without Zhao to balance his views, and to push him towards the reform he so greatly desired, Deng reverted to the old maxim of the CCP: Communist control of China above all else. These demonstrations were portrayed as a threat and Deng was now under the opinion they must be dealt with, “after listening to their [Li Peng and the President Yang Shangkun] report, Deng immediately agreed to label the student demonstrations ‘anti-party anti-socialist turmoil’ and proposed to resolve the situation quickly, in

⁵⁴ Bao Pu, Renee Chiang, and Adi Ignatius, *Prisoner of the State*, 8

⁵⁵ Bao Pu, Renee Chiang, and Adi Ignatius, *Prisoner of the State*, 10.

the manner of ‘using a sharp knife to cut through knotted hemp.’”⁵⁶ This private meeting between these three powerful figures was made public and their remarks paraphrased into the editorial for the *People’s Daily* by Li Peng. Deng Xiaoping was not pleased with Li Peng, because he had made his remarks from this private meeting, public. Deng prefers to pull the strings in private and is not the public face that Mao once was. He uses his subordinates to carry out his wishes and if something goes wrong he can always blame them and move on, but now he was seen to be publicly denouncing the protests and directly confronting them in official meetings in the highest circles of China. The editorial could also not be retracted, because as Zhao mentions, it “would imply that China’s supreme leader had made a mistake.”⁵⁷ Now Deng was forced into the spotlight by Li Peng and positioned against the students and he could not rescind his inflammatory remarks.

The rapid rate at which Li Peng attempted his coup is surprising, but what is even more alarming is the sudden reversal of the Politburo away from the Zhao’s calm acquiescence to the protests. At this point Zhao portrays Li Peng as a deceitful radical who seized power by making the dwindling protest movement seem more like a budding revolution attempting to seize power from the Communists. Perhaps Deng was ready to crackdown on these protests all along, but was being held back by Zhao Ziyang. This sudden change in policy reveals the inherent weakness in the CCP. Of course there were some reformers, but when a threat was perceived it had to be dealt with. Li Peng was drawing on this weakness by agitating the insecurities of the hardliners to seize power from Zhao and deal with this protest once and for all.

⁵⁶ Bao Pu, Renee Chiang, and Adi Ignatius, *Prisoner of the State*, 10.

⁵⁷ Bao Pu, Renee Chiang, and Adi Ignatius, *Prisoner of the State*, 8.

The Editorial in Question

The *People's Daily* editorial begins by praising the outpouring of emotion following the death of Hu Yaobang. However, according to the CCP, these emotions should be channeled in other ways that are beneficial to the government and their pursuit of modernization. What follows is a description of the student demonstrations;

During the mourning period, abnormal situations emerged. A tiny handful of people took this opportunity to fabricate rumors and openly attack Party and government leaders; they poisoned and bewitched the masses to attack the New China Gate of Zhongnanhai, the location of the Central Committee of the Party and National Council.⁵⁸

This description of the protests is the close minded hard-line view of the student demonstrations. The demonstrations are abnormal, and only a “tiny handful” of people attacked the government, despite the fact that protests grew to over 100,000 people before this editorial was published. This tiny minority was blamed for the only violent incident to happen during these protests at Zhongnanhai. This tiny group of people was able to turn the masses against the government despite the lack of an overall organization leading the protests. This first portion of the editorial illustrates how the government blatantly tried to minimize the importance of the demonstrations and the sheer number of people protesting the government.

The editorial goes on to say the government exercised great restraint in regards to the demonstrations. The police were not ordered to clear the square as they usually would have been, but rather the students were simply asked to be respectful and mourn Hu Yaobang's death in an appropriate manner. The editorial continues by describing the activities after the mourning

⁵⁸ Editorial, *People's Daily*, April 26, 1989, Reproduced in Pei-kai Cheng, Michael Lestz, and Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China: A Documentary Collection* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), 488. Full editorial text reproduced in Appendix.

was concluded as, slanderous, in violation of the constitution, and encouraging resistance to the CCP.⁵⁹ The editorial demeans the spontaneous student organizations which sprang up around Beijing campuses. These illegal organizations were responsible for the class boycotts and teacher strikes. This “tiny handful of people with ulterior motives continued to take advantage of the grief of the students.”⁶⁰ Beijing University’s broadcast center was attributed to some students forcibly occupying loudspeaker rooms, despite the fact that Shen Tong ran the broadcast center out of his and other friend’s rooms. This section of the editorial serves to continue to demean the importance of the demonstrations and the spontaneity of them. The protests were caused by thousands of students feeling dissatisfaction with the government and standing up against it, inspiring tens of thousands more to speak out. There was no single small entity in control of the entire movement at any time from the death of Hu Yaobang to the eventual suppression of the movement.

Next the government issues their assessment of the demonstrations,

All these facts indicate that this tiny handful of people are not really engaged in mourning Comrade Hu Yaobang. Their goal is not to promote the process of socialist democracy in China nor are they simply complaining because they are dissatisfied. They are waving the flag of democracy to destroy democracy and law and order. Their goal is to sow dissension in people’s minds, to disrupt the entire nation, and to ruin an orderly and united political situation. This is a planned conspiracy; it is turmoil which, in essence, aims at negating the leadership of the Communist people and the socialist system. This is a serious political struggle confronting the entire people and all the peoples of the entire nation.⁶¹

⁵⁹Editorial, *People’s Daily*, April 26, 1989, Reproduced in Pei-kai Cheng, Michael Lestz, and Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China: A Documentary Collection*, 489.

⁶⁰Editorial, *People’s Daily*, April 26, 1989, Reproduced in Pei-kai Cheng, Michael Lestz, and Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China: A Documentary Collection*, 489.

⁶¹ Editorial, *People’s Daily*, April 26, 1989, Reproduced in Pei-kai Cheng, Michael Lestz, and Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China: A Documentary Collection*, 489.

In this section the government declares the student demonstrators anarchists disrupting the nation and assures the people they will struggle to protect the nation. The government now reduces this tiny handful of people to anarchists who are trying to destroy the country. The group of dissenters is tiny, however, they are able to disrupt the entire nation and the problems they are causing are serious issues for everyone in the entire state. With one sentence the government dismisses the feelings of thousands of people and yet elevates them as something that threatens the entire nation, and the future of the government.

This paragraph of propaganda illustrates the problem the government has with the protests. The beginning of the movement was in keeping with Chinese tradition of mourning prominent leaders and was allowed to occur, but now the government has had enough and these demonstrations must stop, but at the same time the government cannot show weakness, so all this dissent is attributed to a small group of radicals. Yes there will always be radicals in any movement, but these radicals did not inspire over 100,000 Beijing residents to march to Tiananmen. By calling this a threat that concerns the entire nation the government has now given much more power and legitimacy to this week of peaceful and restrained student protests with only one violent incident. The government accomplishes giving the protests even more gravitas with their next paragraph, which claims that if the protests are left unchecked all “the enormous accomplishments of ten years of reform could be entirely lost.”⁶² The fact that this editorial was commissioned by Li Peng a hard-line conservative rival of Zhao Ziyang the reform minded leader of China at the time makes this statement laughable. The student protesters were fighting for more reform not threatening it, and yet the government claims that these students are

⁶²Editorial, *People's Daily*, April 26, 1989, Reproduced in Pei-kai Cheng, Michael Lestz, and Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China: A Documentary Collection*, 489.

creating “turmoil” that could threaten the entire fabric of the country and create chaos. Here, the government’s most important maxim shines through; democracy is chaos and the CCP is safety and stability for China. With increased democracy “a China with enormous hopes and a great future would be changed into a China in turmoil, a land without peace of future.”⁶³ To the CCP these demonstrations became everything they were afraid of.

The editorial declares that every Chinese citizen should unite against these illegal organizations and understand the gravity of the situation. It continues by threatening people through prohibiting demonstrations and parades; forbidding the forming of unions in factories, farming villages, and schools.⁶⁴ The government then attempts to link themselves with the demonstrations. They conclude that the masses of students are generally pursuing an end to corruption and promote democracy; “these demands can only be realized under the leadership of the Party and through the strengthening of administrative structure, the active promotion of reform, and the amplification of socialist democracy and law and order.”⁶⁵ Now the demonstrations are keeping with the goals of the party, instead of threatening the very fabric of Communist China. Democratic reform can only be realized with the authority of the CCP. Once again the CCP is emphasizing their need to stay in power above all else, and it behooves the government to identify with these demonstrations that undeniably enjoy a great amount of popular support. The editorial starts out praising the demonstrations; then proceeds to eviscerate the students and call their actions unlawful and threatening the entire nation to its core; finally

⁶³Editorial, *People’s Daily*, April 26, 1989, Reproduced in Pei-kai Cheng, Michael Lestz, and Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China: A Documentary Collection*, 489.

⁶⁴Editorial, *People’s Daily*, April 26, 1989, Reproduced in Pei-kai Cheng, Michael Lestz, and Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China: A Documentary Collection*, 490.

⁶⁵ Editorial, *People’s Daily*, April 26, 1989, Reproduced in Pei-kai Cheng, Michael Lestz, and Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China: A Documentary Collection*, 490.

the editorial finishes by linking the demonstrators to the government and reiterates the importance of the CCP's control of the nation.

The back and forth of the editorial illustrates how the government does not know exactly how to respond to the protests. The protests started as legitimate demonstrations of mourning, which Zhao Ziyang agreed was in keeping with tradition and a completely acceptable reaction to Hu's death. The only problem had arisen when the students were beaten by police which created fervor among the subsequent demonstrators. The government also saw that this demonstration may, as many previous student demonstrations had, get out of control and threaten the strength of the CCP. The government was being stalled by their previous experiences of democratic movements. As stated earlier this was the third democracy movement in only a decade; this movement also had accomplished more than previous movements. The government's ideological split was becoming more and more apparent. While the reform minded Zhao was on a state visit, proving his confidence that the situation would return to normal, the hard-line conservative Li Peng was issuing an inflammatory editorial denouncing the demonstrations. A policy was agreed upon by the highest governing body and then reversed by the hard-liners. Fear was starting to grip the hard-line conservatives and the door to a more decisive response was now open with this new stance against the demonstrations.

Fallout

The *People's Daily* editorial became a turning point in the democratic movement and forced many students into action. With this propaganda piece Zhao explains, “the situation immediately changed, and the confrontation escalated... those who were moderate before were then forced to take sides with the extremists.”⁶⁶ On April 27 the students planned to march in response to the editorial. Their patriotic purpose was considered anti-party and a plot against the government. The students that were ready to go back to class were now reenergized with greater purpose. Now the government actually had something to fear. Once again, the government’s disproportionate response to the demonstrations failed to have the desired effect, “all day long the government broadcast warnings on the radio and on television, saying that the rally scheduled for the next day was illegal. By telling the students to call it off, these warnings actually helped get the word out.”⁶⁷ The universities in Beijing were buzzing with excitement; a face-off between the police and the students was imminent. Shen reports that the students were prepared for the worst; at this point it looked like the government would take a hard stance against the demonstrations if they rallied, “some students were preparing to die, shaving their heads and writing their wills.”⁶⁸ On the side of the government Zhao reveals, “many senior cadres grew quite worried about the student demonstrations. After Deng Xiaoping’s remarks, they were afraid that the escalating confrontation would result in bloodshed.”⁶⁹ Both sides anticipated bloodshed with this increasing rhetoric and intensity.

⁶⁶Bao Pu, Renee Chiang, and Adi Ignatius, *Prisoner of the State: the Secret Journal of Premier Zhao Ziyang*, 12.

⁶⁷ Shen Tong. *Almost a Revolution: The Story of a Chinese Student’s Journey from Boyhood to Leadership in Tiananmen Square*, 196.

⁶⁸ Shen Tong. *Almost a Revolution: The Story of a Chinese Student’s Journey from Boyhood to Leadership in Tiananmen Square*, 199.

⁶⁹Bao Pu, Renee Chiang, and Adi Ignatius, *Prisoner of the State: the Secret Journal of Premier Zhao Ziyang*, 13.

On 27 April the government was gripped with indecision. The hard-liners were being bombarded by warnings of violence by reformer politicians and with 150,000⁷⁰ demonstrators marching against the police, the government did nothing. When the crackdown never came, the students were victorious, “and were left feeling more encouraged and fearless than ever.”⁷¹ This strong rhetoric, followed by a lack of action, served only to strengthen the students’ resolve. The editorial which was meant to put fear into the students and curtail their movement had the opposite effect; the movement had grown bigger. Despite the fact people knew Deng Xiaoping’s remarks were in the editorial, the demonstration still took place. This meant that even the supreme ruler coming out against the protests could not sway the students. The façade was cracking and the government would have to deal with the protesters soon, or risk losing their position of power. If the supreme ruler’s public admonishments of the protests were not enough to dissuade more people to join these rebellious students, the government would be forced to take more drastic action. The protesters were now aware of the government’s stance against the protests, and the protests were still growing, these supporters were now publicly opposing the government and that would not be permissible by the government, which must stay in power despite all things.

Zhao Ziyang was met with this increasingly aggressive rhetoric and an increasing amount of students occupying Tiananmen when he returned from North Korea. Li Peng immediately begged Zhao to come out in support of the editorial, but Zhao believed a strategy of “downplaying [the editorial] and gradually changing”⁷² government policy in response to the

⁷⁰ Shen, Tong. *Almost a Revolution: The Story of a Chinese Student’s Journey from Boyhood to Leadership in Tiananmen Square*, 205.

⁷¹ Bao Pu, Renee Chiang, and Adi Ignatius, *Prisoner of the State: the Secret Journal of Premier Zhao Ziyang*, 13.

⁷² Bao Pu, Renee Chiang, and Adi Ignatius, *Prisoner of the State: the Secret Journal of Premier Zhao Ziyang*, 19.

protests. On May 4, 1989, the seventieth anniversary of the 1919 protest against the treaty of Versailles, Zhao gave a scheduled speech to the Asian Development Bank, “the tone was distinctly different from the April 26 editorial, yet I [Zhao Ziyang] used no phrasing that directly contradicted it.”⁷³ This speech however was seen by the demonstrators as a softening of policy that had come too late. Perhaps if this speech was given on the 25 of April it may have had the desired effect, however, “Zhao’s conciliatory remarks had the paradoxical effect of polarizing the student movement...by revealing the existence of a clear split among top party leaders.”⁷⁴ According to Zhao Ziyang, this is not true. The real reason the student movement lasted so long was the plan he laid out on his return from Pyongyang, “to defuse tensions, to open dialogue, to resolve the issue through democracy and law, and to start tackling hot issues by proceeding with political reform,”⁷⁵ was blocked by Li Peng and his associates. Zhao blames the resistance of Li Peng as the catalyst for the movement growing out of hand, but this does reveal a definite split in the party, and Zhao’s public espousal of his plans to defuse the situation were contrary to Li Peng’s editorial. A split exists, but Zhao denies his responsibility for creating it. Zhao believed Li Peng always wanted to violently crush the demonstrations and was blocking peaceful measures so a violent solution would be required. Whatever the cause, once again, government action had the opposite effect it was supposed to. Zhao’s cooling of tensions was too little too late. On May fourth, as expected, over 100,000 people marched on Tiananmen Square; “altogether, demonstrations were reported in more than twenty cities, involving upwards of one million people.”⁷⁶ The movement was growing and spreading throughout China; the fictitious

⁷³ Bao Pu, Renee Chiang, and Adi Ignatius, *Prisoner of the State*, 19.

⁷⁴ Richard Baum, *Burying Mao: Chinese Politics in the Age of Deng Xiaoping* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 254.

⁷⁵ Bao Pu, Renee Chiang, and Adi Ignatius, *Prisoner of the State*, 23.

⁷⁶ Richard Baum, *Burying Mao*, 253.

threat the editorial cited was becoming real. After the editorial, with Li Peng swaying Deng Xiaoping, the only thing that would end these demonstrations was violent suppression or real democratic reform, and Deng Xiaoping favored the former over the latter.

Beware the Ides of May

On May 15 the long awaited Sino-Soviet summit would occur. The 33 year long rift between the Soviet Union and Communist China would end. Gorbachev's visit to China was a pivotal moment for the student demonstrators. His democratic changes in the Soviet Union were an inspiration for the students and served as a foil to the CCP's lack of cooperation and willingness to democratize at all. Two days before Gorbachev's scheduled visit, the students, frustrated with their lack of results, decided to begin a hunger strike:

More than two hundred students from more than twenty universities, with more than a thousand others to act as guards, entered Tiananmen Square to stage a sit-in and a hunger strike. From this day on, the students occupied the square, up until the bloody incident of June Fourth.”⁷⁷

The hunger strike was perfectly timed, “with scores of international journalists and television cameras converging on Beijing to record the long-awaited Sino-Soviet summit.”⁷⁸ This hunger strike was incredibly successful at winning popular support for the movement outside the universities, but “the more they pushed ahead, the more pretext Li Peng and his associates had to crack down on them using violent means.”⁷⁹ The movement was now caught in a paradox. The more successful they became and the more support the students won, the bigger the threat to CCP power they would become. The government was approaching their limit. They could not ignore the crowd which grew every day. Even the number of hunger strikers was growing with every passing day.

By May 16 Zhao was beginning to lose control. At a meeting of the Standing Committee Zhao proposed to retract the *People's Daily* editorial and acquiesce to one of the students'

⁷⁷ Bao Pu, Renee Chiang, and Adi Ignatius, *Prisoner of the State*, 27.

⁷⁸ Richard Baum, *Burying Mao*, 255.

⁷⁹ Bao Pu, Renee Chiang, and Adi Ignatius, *Prisoner of the State*, 25.

primary demands. The main reason this was seen as an impossible demand was the fact that a retraction would embarrass Deng Xiaoping, and even after Zhao offered to take full responsibility for the editorial, his proposal was rejected. This was the beginning of Zhao's shrinking influence. On May 17, after Zhao's defeat by the Standing Committee, he realized the only way he could execute his plan was to speak directly to Deng Xiaoping. After requesting a meeting, Zhao was instructed to report to Deng's house in the afternoon. When Zhao arrived to find the entire Standing Committee at Deng's house, he "realized that things had already taken a bad turn."⁸⁰ After expressing his beliefs that appeasing the students would allow the party to retake the moral high ground and win back popular support and remain in control, he was attacked by Li Peng and blamed for the escalation of the demonstrations due to his speech on May 4. Deng had obviously made up his mind and Zhao was becoming the scapegoat his predecessor was in 1986. At this meeting the split in the government was rectified. Zhao was blamed and Deng proposed to declare martial law. The party had decided once again that their power over China was paramount to all else. Zhao offered his resignation in response to his obvious ousting from power, but "his attempt to resign was rejected out of hand, and the SC proceeded to approve Deng's proposal to implement martial law at the conclusion of Gorbachev's visit."⁸¹ Zhao's resignation was not refused due to continuing confidence in him, but rather a change in leadership right before the declaration of martial law would further weaken the government. Deng Xiaoping showed his true colors. There was no balance in the government now. Deng Xiaoping had Li Peng and other hard-liners to advise him on a violent stance for the government but no strong reformer who would now speak up. The party had now coalesced at the expense of Zhao.

⁸⁰ Bao Pu, Renee Chiang, and Adi Ignatius, *Prisoner of the State*, 27.

⁸¹ Richard Baum, *Burying Mao*, 258.

Despite Zhao's obvious isolation and his own wishes to resign, Gorbachev was not leaving until the 18, giving Zhao some time to convince the students to end the hunger strike. On May 18 four members of the Standing Committee visited a hospital with a group of hunger strikers. Zhao Ziyang, Li Peng, and two others were seen with concerned looks on their faces, which may have been actual concern for these students or concern for the uproar which would certainly come with one of the sympathetic students' deaths. This visit proved fruitless and "after several minutes, the Chinese leaders left the hospital without having secured an agreement to end the strike."⁸² In another attempt to make headway, that afternoon, Li Peng and other politicians engaged in a televised meeting with the student hunger strike leaders. This meeting was clearly only an attempt by Li Peng to find out if the students would leave the square. He was under no circumstances prepared to give anything to the students, so this meeting became confrontational and only served to anger Li Peng further. It is noteworthy that these multiple attempts to get students to abandon the hunger strike occurred after martial law had already been accepted as policy by the Standing Committee. Whether or not these attempts was the government simply posturing is unknown, but "some observers have treated the government's show of concern...as a cynical charade, designed to shift the burden of responsibility for the coming crackdown from the party to the student leaders."⁸³ At any rate, neither the students nor the government was budging. One final Politburo meeting occurred on the evening of May 18. Zhao tried one last time to stop the declaration of martial law. After he was repeatedly rebuffed, "Zhao left the meeting, ordered up a car, and asked to be driven to Tiananmen Square."⁸⁴ In this early morning visit to Tiananmen Zhao tried one last time to end the hunger strike, "he

⁸² Richard Baum, *Burying Mao*, 259.

⁸³ Richard Baum, *Burying Mao*, 261.

⁸⁴ Richard Baum, *Burying Mao*, 262.

plaintively apologized to them: ‘We’ve come too late,’ he said, his voice heavy with emotion, his eyes filled with tears. ‘I’m sorry.’”⁸⁵ After this Zhao disappeared from public life and requested a three-day leave from the Politburo which is all it took for Zhao to become irrelevant in the CCP. The next day, May 20, 1989, with no word of opposition from Zhao, “Premier Li Peng and president of China, Yang Shangkun, declared martial law and ordered units of the People’s Liberation Army.”⁸⁶ The government was no longer split between reform and conservative. It was united against the student movement, which had finally grown too large and presented too great a threat to party control. Beijing was in crisis and the fate of democracy in China would be decided.

⁸⁵ Richard Baum, *Burying Mao*, 262.

⁸⁶ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 742.

China's Under Martial Law

These demonstrations formed the largest democracy movement China had ever seen. For over a month demonstrators controlled Tiananmen Square and their popular support had been growing with every day they continued to demonstrate. The government's previous attempts to end the demonstrations had the opposite effect on the students and only further emboldened them and their supporters to further challenge the government. What started as a traditional outpouring of emotion for a fallen leader, had transformed into a democracy movement which enjoyed the support of Beijing and groups all over China. The protests had become everything the government feared.

On May 19 the government had enough and sent in military units to end the demonstrations and take back the square. These units were being sent in earlier than the official declaration to try to catch the students off guard. However, before the students even had time to react, "every military column the Army dispatched—and they came from all points of the compass—was blocked, first by hundreds, then thousands, then tens of thousands of ordinary people."⁸⁷ The demonstrations now had the support of the regular citizens of Beijing. The citizens were uniting to protect the students in the square. Army columns were being halted all over the city by ordinary citizens and with no orders to proceed at all costs to the square, the troops had little motivation to fight through the throngs of people (This early attempt to take the square had no teeth). Thousands of troops and military vehicles were attempting to take the square, but they had no orders to proceed no matter what the cost, and citizens were even unclear whether or not the convoys were even carrying weapons. When weapons were seen, "the casual

⁸⁷Brook, *Quelling the People*, 48.

manner in which they were held suggested...they were not loaded...at this point, the Chinese government was not brandishing the threat of violence at the people of Beijing.”⁸⁸ Once again, the government executed a harsh response to the student demonstrations, but failed to follow it up. The initial demonstrations were condoned by the government; then after the editorial, the mass demonstrations were allowed to enter the square instead of being kept out; now after martial law has been declared, the soldiers are not told to proceed despite resistance, and the soldiers are not prepared to use force against the protesters. The resistance around Beijing was a spontaneous reaction by the citizens of Beijing. These blockades sprung up all over Beijing and were manned throughout the day, “there were no identifiable leaders, but everybody knew what to do.”⁸⁹ The declaration of martial law was obviously unpopular with the people of Beijing, and motivated common people to rebel against the government. These people and organizations were previously apolitical and had no stake in the democracy movement, but now these people were energized and deeply involved. According to Calhoun, “people felt an emotional bond with these students, who were risking their lives to protest a government all agreed was corrupt.”⁹⁰ The hunger strikes forced the government to take a firmer stance due to this huge outpouring of support for the students. Directly after the declaration of martial law, things ground to a halt. The citizens of Beijing would not allow troops to pass, and People’s Liberation Army troops were not prepared to break through the blockades and open fire. At the same time, the movement was growing too large for the students to remain in charge. The heart of the protesters and the most influential leaders were the hunger strikers, they commanded the most respect due to their absolute commitment to the cause (and the immense sympathy given to

⁸⁸ Brook, *Quelling the People*, 56.

⁸⁹ Brook, *Quelling the People*, 60.

⁹⁰ Calhoun, *Niether Gods nor Emperors*, 89.

them), but even they were not in charge of the entire movement. With workers unions, press unions, and students from other cities entering the square at all times and joining the movement, creating one clear goal for the movement was impossible. Each new group set up its own headquarters and formed its own leadership committees. This challenged the authority of the student leadership organizations and forced protesters who wanted to stay relevant and take a leadership role to take drastic action and push the envelope. This problem had plagued the movement since the beginning. Beijing University also was the center of revolutionary activity and they were the strongest advocates for democracy throughout the movement as opposed to many universities who joined the movement when it was convenient and things were going well for the students, but even the leadership Beijing University elected was not completely in control of the movement. Uniting all the universities in Beijing was almost impossible in the early stages of the protests, when the exchange of information between universities was a challenge. The movement had grown too fast for its own good and now the size and diversity of support which was protecting the movement from the army was preventing it from creating one unified policy and getting any of their demands met by the government. With the government unable to commit to violent action, and with the student protests unable to create a unified policy, both sides were at an impasse.

By June the government was obviously preparing for the imminent crackdown, between 150,000 and 200,000 troops from at least twelve group armies, representing three greater military regions, had converged upon the Beijing area and were now in position.⁹¹ To put those numbers into context the allies stormed the beaches of Normandy on D-Day with 150,000 men. On May 30 the students unveiled the Goddess of Democracy. This 40 foot-tall plastic foam and wire

⁹¹ Baum, *Burying Mao*, 279.

statue was built by the students to reinvigorate the students who had been demonstrating for over a month with very few tangible results. Many Beijing students were returning to school and handing over control to the students from out of town and representatives from other organizations around Beijing, however, this statue served as “a focal point and drew a continuous flow of ordinary people and other visitors into the Square.”⁹² This statue was a symbol for the movement, but also a target for the government. This reinvigorated the protests and created further confrontation with the government. The give and take of the protests was coming to a head. The stronger and more popular the movement became, the more the government had to suppress it. The larger the protest became the more force would be required to clear the square. The government now had over one hundred thousand heavily armed soldiers in place, which now had a clear symbolic target to destroy. The final crackdown was about to begin.

The Chinese were merely clearing a square of peaceful protesters, “to the citizens of Beijing, it looked as though their leaders were preparing to use a sledgehammer to kill an ant. It was all out of proportion.”⁹³ The government was clearly sending a message to the protesters and to the rest of the nation. The hotly anticipated crackdown was finally underway, “a deadline was set: Tiananmen Square was to be cleared no later than daybreak Sunday [June 4] morning.”⁹⁴ The government was not only committing a disproportionate amount of troops to Beijing, but also the type of troops they committed to deal with the protests were disproportionate to the needs of the army. During the first attempt at retaking the square in late May, the use of armor and Armored Personnel Carriers was kept to a minimum. Most citizens only had to deal with stopping trucks and jeeps on the road. However, in June the PLA

⁹² Calhoun, *Niether Gods nor Emperors*, 92.

⁹³ Brook, *Quelling the People*, 80.

⁹⁴ Baum, *Burying Mao*, 282.

committed large amounts of armor and APC's to the outskirts of Beijing, "the role of the APCs was...to drive a wedge through the crowds that had blocked the soldiers coming in by truck."⁹⁵

The citizens who had stood up so bravely against the earlier attempts were now simply overpowered. The APCs smashed through the makeshift roadblocks, crushing people and raking windows with gunfire killing even more. The army was converging on Tiananmen from the East and the West shooting at anything and everything on the way. . The violence was intended to dissuade the people from ever taking part in a movement of this kind ever again; however, this was one last mistake in judgment by the CCP. The violence angered the citizens and they fought back. In some places the citizens were able to inflict large amounts of casualties on the PLA. On a two mile stretch of road just west of Tiananmen, later dubbed "Blood Road," the worst of the fighting occurred. Here the citizens effectively fought back against the government onslaught, "65 PLA trucks and 47 APCs belonging to the 38th Group Army were totally destroyed, and 485 other military vehicles were damaged. The government's official casualty count from this single "battle" totaled 6 soldiers killed and 1,114 wounded."⁹⁶ It is impossible to find a reliable tally of civilian deaths, but according to eyewitnesses to the battle that occurred, hundreds of people most likely died. Despite the clear message being sent by the government, the citizens of Beijing were fighting to the bitter end. By the morning of June 4 the army had made it to the square and demanded that the students evacuate immediately. After deliberation the remaining students decided to leave the square peacefully;

As they walked out in bedraggled but orderly formation, troops and tanks overran their encampments and crushed the liberty statue to pieces. There followed a

⁹⁵ Brook, *Quelling the People*, 124.

⁹⁶ Baum, *Burying Mao*, 283.

period of macabre and terrifying chaos in Peking, as the army gunned down students and citizens both near the square and in other areas of the city.”⁹⁷

For the rest of the morning gunshots, explosions, and flames engulfed Beijing. After the square was cleared, soldiers still engaged in the senseless killing of civilians. The army’s objectives were to clear the square by June 4, and this was accomplished peacefully. With the square secured, the violence should not have continued. Whether this added violence was ordered by the government or not, it served to further intimidate the citizens and prevent any further reaction in the form of a democracy movement. At this point, it was clear that this was the crackdown that was meant to end the movement once and for all. Whether or not this level of violence was intended or was just soldiers getting caught up in the moment are unknown, but the use of violent force to suppress the movement was clearly the government’s intention. If the government did not intend for so much violence they would not have brought in crack troops and armed them heavily for an assault on a hostile force. The government intended for there to be bloodshed, and equipped their soldiers to provide for the most damage possible. When the sun came up, Tiananmen Square was no longer occupied by the students; the Goddess of Democracy was in pieces; there were hundreds maybe even thousands of bodies all over Beijing; and most of all the Chinese Communist Party was in complete control of China with Deng Xiaoping the undisputed ruler. After almost two months of demonstrations, nothing had changed. Party unity and control was far too powerful, and with this violent suppression of the greatest democracy movement in Chinese history the future of democracy in China looked bleak.

⁹⁷ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 743.

China Since Tiananmen

The fact that no political concessions had to be made is the real legacy of Tiananmen. The government was able to ignore all the demands of the students after the Tiananmen Square Massacre because of the violent suppression of the movement. By fighting a pitched battle in Beijing, the government asserted its power over the people. Within weeks of the massacre, the physical scars were already gone. With greater economic freedoms and a booming economy, people have put Tiananmen out of their heads, but Tiananmen affected millions of Chinese citizens, so it is never completely out of mind. In 1997 when Deng Xiaoping died, police were dispatched immediately to Tiananmen. The fear was his death could be used to trigger unrest just as Zhao Enlai and Hu Yaobang's deaths had been.

After the suppression of the student demonstrations Deng Xiaoping was forced into action, "Deng Xiaoping launched the new economic reform campaign of 1992, which caused a surge of economic growth and triggered an explosion of entrepreneurial activity."⁹⁸ This economic reform's purpose was to placate the people. The government believed "that giving people more opportunity to make money would make them less inclined to take to the streets demanding democracy as they had done in 1989."⁹⁹ Deng Xiaoping and the government had to offer some conciliation to the people of China to avoid further democratic demonstrations. Economic freedoms were offered as a distraction from the lack of political freedoms. This was a gamble. Right after Tiananmen, it looked as if civil war was a definite possibility. Many scholars predicted the end of the Chinese Communist state, or at the very least, drastic political changes. With the greater affluence enjoyed by the Chinese people after the economic reforms,

⁹⁸ Miles, *The Legacy of Tiananmen*, 14.

⁹⁹ Miles, *The Legacy of Tiananmen*, 14.

the political impetus was gone. When the common citizen moved into the developing middle class it was easier for them to accept the lack of political freedoms in China. Tiananmen is out of sight and relegated to memory, but it was the turning point in Communist China. If Tiananmen was left unchecked, the movement would have forced the government to accept some political reform. The movement had grown too large to be ignored, and the government was faced with the growing specter of democracy.

This problem had been developing since the creation of the Chinese Communist Party. The CCP was formed as a direct result of the May Fourth Movement of 1919. The party was formed after the first mass democracy movement in modern Chinese history, and through the existence of the CCP, the government struggled with the opening of the political dialogue and maintaining power over the Chinese people. Early in the reign of the communists, Mao believed that a constant state of revolution was needed to maintain order and to be good communists. However, if there is constant revolution the government would be out of power in no time, supplanted by a new regime. The government struggled with this duality from the beginning. Communism dictates the peasants are the ideal class and the heart of the nation. However, with a modernized economy, free-thinking intellectuals are needed to drive the country forward, but throughout Chinese history when intellectuals were given more freedoms, they started movements that threatened the power of the CCP. By 1989, this cycle of acquiescing to the intellectuals only to repress them was at an end, and the violent suppression of the Tiananmen protests was inevitable. If the government defused the situation instead of publishing the inflammatory editorial, they would have had another movement to deal with in only a few years. The democracy movements were getting more numerous and with shorter time spans in between. Something had to be done. By violently suppressing the movement, the government preserved

their power and ended the democratic cycle once and for all. What set the Tiananmen Square Massacre apart from all other democratic movements was the way it was suppressed. The huge scope of the operation and the intensity of the violence set this massacre apart from the rest of the failed attempts at democracy that had come before Tiananmen. Tiananmen was the end of this long democratic cycle because of the totality of the ending. Intellectuals blacklisted and imprisoned beforehand still existed as human beings, and no outlet was given for them to exercise their talents. With Tiananmen, the CCP killed as many dissenters as possible and sent a clear message to the rest of the intellectuals that dissent was not to be tolerated, and would be violently suppressed. But with this violent suppression the CCP slammed shut only the possibility of political progress, what has kept the intellectuals in line for decades since Tiananmen, is their importance to the modern Chinese economy. Thus Tiananmen became the whip to dissuade political dissention, while the CCP offered the carrot of economic freedoms and the wealth which would accompany it.

Appendix

People's Daily: "We Must Unequivocally Oppose Unrest," April 26, 1989¹⁰⁰

In the mourning activities commemorating the death of Hu Yaobang, vast numbers of Communist Party members, workers, peasants, intellectuals, cadres, People's Liberation Army soldiers, and young students expressed their grief in many forms and indicated that sorrow should be transformed to[sic] into strength, a strength that could contribute to the realization of the Four Modernizations and the revival of China.

During the mourning period, abnormal situations emerged. A tiny handful of people took this opportunity to fabricate rumors and openly attack Party and government leaders; the poisoned and bewitched the masses to attack the New China Gate of Zhongnanhai, the location of the Central Committee of the Party and National Council; there were even some people who shouted counter-revolutionary slogans such as "Down with the Communist Party!"; in the provincial capital cities of Xi'an and Changsha, rioters used the occasion to engage in serious instances of assault, vandalism, looting, and arson.

In its consideration for the deep grief of the vast masses, the Party and the government adopted a tolerant and restrained attitude toward some of the inappropriate words and deeds of these young students who acted in moments of emotional distress. Before the mourning service commemorating Comrade Hu Yaobang on April 22nd, the police did not, in conformance with past practice, clear Tiananmen square where some students had already gathered. The police simply asked them to behave in a disciplined manner so that all could mourn Comrade Hu Yaobang. Owing to the mutual efforts of all involved, the mourning service could smoothly take place in a solemn and dignified manner.

But after the mourning service, a tiny handful of people with ulterior motives continued to take advantage of the grief of the students to fabricate all sorts of rumors, poison people's mind[sic], and used posters and handbills to slander, deprecate, and attack the Party and government leaders. They openly violated the constitution and encouraged opposition to the leadership of the Communist Party and the socialist system. In some institutions of higher education they formed illegal organizations to "wrest power" from student government associations and some of them even forcibly occupied school loudspeaker control rooms; in other schools, they encouraged students to boycott classes and teachers to strike and even used force to prevent students from attending class. Fraudulently using the name of workers' organizations, they circulated reactionary flyers, and moreover, began establishing contacts in all quarters in order to manufacture an even more serious incident.

All these facts indicate that this tiny handful of people are not really engaged in mourning Comrade Hu Yaobang. Their goal is not to promote the process of socialist democracy in China nor are they simply complaining because they are dissatisfied. They are waving the flag

¹⁰⁰ Editorial, *People's Daily*, April 26, 1989, Reproduced in Pei-kai Cheng, Michael Lestz, and Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China: A Documentary Collection* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), 488.

of democracy to destroy democracy and law and order. Their goal is to sow dissension in people's minds, to disrupt the entire nation, and to ruin an orderly and united political situation. This is a planned conspiracy; it is turmoil which, in essence, aims at negating the leadership of the Communist people and the socialist system. This is a serious political struggle confronting the entire people and all the peoples of the entire nation.

If this turmoil is appeased or tolerated, if it is allowed to simply develop, a serious and chaotic situation will emerge in the future. The reform, opening, good management, construction, development, control of inflation, betterment of living standards, anti-corruption, and construction of democracy and law and order that are hoped for by the people of the entire nation, including the vast majority of students, will vanish like a popped soap bubble. Even the enormous accomplishments of ten years of reform could be entirely lost; the glorious hope of the entire people for the revival of China could become impossible to realize. A China with enormous hopes and a great future would be changed into a China in turmoil, a land without peace or future.

Therefore, the entire Party and the people of the entire nation should sufficiently understand the severity of this struggle. They should unite and unequivocally oppose this turmoil in order to defend our hard-earned political harmony and unity, to protect the constitution, and to defend socialist democracy and law and order. We absolutely will not permit the establishment of any illegal organization; we will resolutely halt all actions based on any pretext designed to encroach upon rights of legally constituted student organizations. Those who intentionally fabricate rumors in order to slander others will be legally prosecuted to the extent of their criminal responsibility. Illegal demonstrations or parades are prohibited; forming contracts in factories, farming villages, and schools is prohibited. Those who engage in acts of assault, vandalism, looting, and arson will be punished according to the law. The legitimate right of students to attend class and study will be protected. The broad masses of the students sincerely hope to eliminate corruption and to advance democracy and these are also the demands of the Party and the government. These demands can only be realized under the leadership of the Party and through the strengthening of administrative structure, the active promotion of reform, and the amplification of socialist democracy and law and order.

All party comrades and all the people of the nation must awaken and recognize that if we do not firmly halt this turmoil, our nation will never have a day of peace. This struggle is connected to the success or failure of reform, opening, and the achievement of the Four Modernizations. It is connected to the future of our nation and our people. Organizations at all levels of the Chinese Communist Party, the vast masses of Communist Party members, patriotic democratic people, and all the people of the nation should distinguish right from wrong and actively take action to firmly and expeditiously stop this turmoil.

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