**An American Worker in Tiananmen Square**

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In May 1989, Nivek Reeves went to Beijing, China, as an observer and supporter of the pro-democracy campaign that was headquartered in Tiananmen Square and known as the Beijing Spring. "An American Worker in Tiananmen Square" is a chronicle of the last 10 days of the Beijing Spring.

**Prologue**

Beijing, Saturday evening, June 3rd, 1989. Under the red banner of the Beijing Autonomous Workers Federation, two Tiananmen Square commanders huddle around a map showing the army locations throughout the city. I ask my English-speaking friend, Feng, about the young man wearing a white cloth headband adorned with red and black characters.

“Yes, he’s one of square commanders,” Feng replies. “He’s from Nanjing University.”

Feng talks for several minutes with the Nanjing commander. When he turns to me, his face looks grave.

“I have information from the Chinese army; they are coming to square at one ’clock.”

The man with the headband walks over to me.

“You friend of Chinese people?”

“Yes, I’m a friend. I support the democracy movement.”

“Thank you!” says the man excitedly. “The army come to square at one,” he said. “Please, tell world we die for freedom and democracy. Please tell international news.”

“Yes, I’m on my way back to my hotel to phone my San Francisco newspaper.”

“Thank you friend!” As he says those words the man takes off his headband and hands it to me. In the middle of the headband are black characters flanked by the similar characters in red on each side.

“What does it say?” I ask Feng.

“Die for democracy, die for freedom,” he answers solemnly.

“What will you do when the army comes?” I ask the Nanjing student.

“Chinese people army. We’re not going to defy them.”

We embrace with great emotion and say good bye. As I set foot on the Avenue of Eternal Peace and head toward the Minzu Hotel, it dawns on me what the emotional meetings I witnessed minutes before under the Goddess of Democracy and Freedom were all about: The hour of decision had arrived for the Tiananmen pro-democracy demonstrators. It was time to leave the square, or face possible martyrdom and die for democracy.

It is just after 11 pm. A large mobilization is gathering in the middle of the street.

A young man in a jeep holds up a bloodied shirt next to a flag. He’s surrounded by a large group of curious people listening to him shouting passionately. Many others are on bicycles, slowing down to view the scene.

I pass the Communist Party compound, where over 1000 demonstrators are angrily confronting at least 100 armed helmeted soldiers. A crowd of people surrounds an overturned vehicle, furiously shaking it. Now I’m at the next intersection, where an army jeep is overturned, flanked by two burned-out buses. The noise and commotion is almost deafening; only the bicycle bells sound louder.

The hotel is just over a block away. I hear shots coming from the direction of the hotel, from the west. Next come shouts of desperation that sound like warnings. A low rumble is getting progressively louder from that same western direction.

Suddenly, two young men come tear-assing out of the shadows doing wheelies on their bicycles, shouting at the top of their lungs. They look like 1989 Chinese versions of Paul Revere. They’ve spotted army. A large group of people come dashing out of a back alley, yelling frantically.

I’m running alongside them, past a car which has been stripped of its radio, toward the Minzu, now less than a block away. It looks like a riot is going on directly in front of the hotel entrance. An angry mob is punching and kicking a man on the ground; some are beating him with sticks and poles.

“Somebody’s getting beaten!” someone shouts in English. “They’ve got a spy! They’ve got a spy!”

An American dashes into the crowd and stuns them by grabbing the beaten man from their clutches and dragging him into the hotel lobby. The outraged crowd starts banging on the doors, screaming for both of them. But their attention is soon diverted by the unfolding scene in the street: A contingent of riot police armed with tear gas and carrying shields was being attacked with bricks and rocks by an angry group of citizens. The mob at the hotel entrance then joins the fracas in the street, causing the police to throw down their shields and retreat into the shadows.

By now the rumbling is so loud the source must be only a few blocks away. Suddenly gunfire erupts from the direction of the advancing storm. Those of us outside the Minzu run inside the hotel lobby. For ten long minutes, gunshots and screams can be heard amidst the escalating rumbling of the tanks. During that time, a steady stream of casualties is brought into the lobby. The first few appear to be teenage soldiers, their heads bloodied and bashed in. A wave of civilian wounded follows.

The first of the tanks is right outside the Minzu. Hotel personnel are pushing us to the rear of the lobby. Minutes later, a hail of bullets shatters the lobby windows. I throw myself on the floor behind a huge painting.

Well, you knew coming here could be dangerous, I thought to myself against the backdrop of screams and bullets. Martial law had already been declared when I had accepted the freelance reporting assignment from the San Francisco Examiner two weeks earlier. And for a union activist and socialist from the United States, being in China to be a part of the Tiananmen Square pro-democracy movement was irresistible.

But now bullets are flying and blood is flowing in the streets outside. Tanks are roaring toward Tiananmen Square, and a long night of terror lies ahead.

**Chapter 1: Background to the Beijing Spring**

April, 1989. Beijing students begin their movement for democracy by holding small demonstrations in the city. Initially, their demands focus largely on greater freedom and autonomy in the educational system. But by the second week of April, it became clear that the students were beginning to stake out a broader vision of their democratic dream.

It crystallized on April 16th, the day after former Communist Party Secretary Hu Yaobang died of a heart attack. Hu, a reformer known for his support for both economic and political liberalization, was greatly admired by the protesting students. Three hundred students carrying wreaths and banners marched into Tiananmen Square proclaiming their respect and admiration for Comrade Hu Yaobang. The students had actually planned to hold a demonstration on May 4th commemorating the seventieth anniversary of the May 4th Movement of 1919, a student-led protest against Japanese imperialism which led to the downfall of the imperial government and the birth of the Chinese Communist Party.

But Hu's death moved the demonstrations forward, giving the opportunistic students a chance to celebrate those aspects of his political life they identified with. Hu, once a favorite of China's paramount leader Deng Xiaoping, had increasingly been associated with the more moderate, reform wing of the party. In death, Hu became a symbol for the pro-democracy students to rally around, as well as articulate their own demands and grievances.

And so the Beijing Spring began that first night in Tiananmen Square with the arrival by bicycle and subway of 300 brave pioneers. The students stayed in the square for several hours before dispersing voluntarily close to midnight, when the police normally cleared it.

The next night saw thousands of students attend rallies at Beijing and People's Universities before marching to Tiananmen Square. They held banners declaring, "Long live democracy; down with dictatorship." Thousands of curious spectators and other students joined them, and the bewildered police could do nothing but protect the demonstrators and hold up traffic at the intersections leading up to Tiananmen.

A cat-and-mouse situation was developing in Beijing. While the reserved police reaction illustrated that the students had caught the government off guard with these early mobilizations, things were not completely one-sided. The factional fight inside the party between the Deng/Li Peng hard-liners and the moderate Zhao Zhang wing was already raging. Neither side had yet defeated the other and consolidated its power. The army's hands-off policy toward the demonstrators was nothing more than a reflection of this.

On April 18th, the party sent a different signal to the demonstrators. Several thousand students left the square and assembled in front of Zhongnanhai, the headquarters for the party's Central committee and the residence of its top leaders, calling on government officials to come out and talk with them. A squad of police plunged into the crowd, beating several demonstrators. It was the first of many confrontations to take place at the Zhongnanhai compound.

But the students were emboldened with the overall success of their budding prodemocracy movement. They kept coming to the square every day leading up to Hu Yaobang's funeral on April 22nd, when a crowd estimated at 150,000 converged on Tiananmen Square.

This was the day when three students leaders knelt on the steps of the Great Hall of the People, the huge governmental complex bordering one side of Tiananmen, begging for a dialogue with the government. They wanted to deliver a petition of grievances to Premier Li Peng, and while they didn't get to see him, they did manage to get inside the building and attempt to deliver the document.

For the first time, the demands of the pro-democracy campaign were articulated on paper. The petition called on the party leaders to engage in a dialogue with the students, reveal their salaries and assets as well as their families' assets, rescind the bans on newspapers, enact price controls, and guarantee that there would be no reprisals against student demonstrators. When the government refused to see the students, thereby foiling their attempt to deliver the petition directly to Li Peng, they left the square and returned to their campuses. The word spread, however, that the protests would continue and classes would be boycotted through May 4th.

The students, feeling the momentum building behind them, continued marching on Tiananmen Square, carrying their banners calling for democracy, free speech, and an end to corruption. And as they did, the working people of Beijing began developing a respect and admiration for the moral courage of the demonstrators. Word was getting around about the students' forthright challenge to the party bureaucrats to reveal their worth and end their privileges, and it was striking a responsive chord.

This was convincingly demonstrated on April 27th, when a crowd of nearly 200,000 occupied the square, and they were not all students. Tens of thousands of ordinary citizens, spectators, and curious on-lookers turning into participants, took the square from the People's Liberation Army soldiers and Beijing's police.

The size of the April 27th demonstration was significant, given the fact that it took place one day after the publication of a harsh editorial in the People's Daily, the newspaper of the ruling Communist Party, which declared that the aim of the protests was to "poison people's minds, create national turmoil and sabotage the nation's political stability. This is a planned conspiracy which, in essence, aims at negating the leadership of the Party and the socialist system."

The bluntness of the tone was an ominous sign, and the theme was one the Deng government would return to in the future. When Stalinists start talking in such terms, bloody army crackdowns are not far off. It was the first indication that the hard-line Deng/Li Peng faction of the Communist Chinese Party was marshalling its forces in order to forcibly end the Tiananmen protests.

But no government editorial in the People's Daily could deter the students and Beijing's populace. The prairie fire was spreading. The people's thirst for democratic rights and their hatred of the rampant bureaucratic privilege was too strong, and they were too encouraged by their early triumphs.

The pro-democracy movement took off, riveting the attention of the entire world. As the students continued boycotting classes and marching into Tiananmen Square, and the citizens of Beijing kept joining them, the Communist Party's authority was being challenged.

During the second week of May, as thousands of students set up camp in the square, many began a hunger strike from their tents. Frustrated by the government 's refusal to hold a dialogue with them, the students felt the radical tactic of a hunger strike would focus world attention on the Deng/Li Peng government and force it to talk with the students about their demands for democracy.

Unfortunately for Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping, Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev was due to arrive in Beijing on May 15th for a long-awaited meeting with the Chinese leadership. On that day, students and citizens, keenly aware of the political cover Gorbachev's visit presented to them, poured into Tiananmen. Hundreds of thousands of workers joined the thousands of student hunger strikers amidst a sea of multicolored banners. The scheduled ceremony for the Soviet leader in the square had to be cancelled; it was far too risky to allow Moscow's architect of glasnost and reform to become the focus of attention for the Tiananmen demonstrators. Much to Deng's humiliation, they were forced to conduct the ceremony at the airport, before sneaking Gorbachev into the government buildings off Tiananmen Square for his meetings with the leadership.

On May 17th, the crowd in and around the square swelled to one million, presenting more problems for Deng Xiaoping. Any doubts that the students did not have the support of Beijing 's working people in their fight for democratic rights were erased with the huge mobilization in Tiananmen that day. For the first time, blue collar workers marched under their own banners proclaiming solid support for the students. "Listen to the Students" read one. Another proclaimed: "They Are Gentle Intellectuals. We Are Rough Workingmen."

The workers viewed the hunger striking students as the emerging moral conscience of China, and they were proud of them. While the rest of the world watched in amazement, the leadership of the Communist Party was alarmed at this budding worker-student alliance. As scores of hunger strikers began lapsing into unconsciousness, workers serving as marshals cleared narrow paths in the square just wide enough for ambulances to take the casualties out of Tiananmen to receive medical care.

It was this overt participation of workers in the Tiananmen pro-democracy campaign that attracted the attention of this unionist in San Francisco. A former antiwar student myself, I was impressed by the moral courage and daring being shown by Beijing's students. But as a socialist, I recognized that if the industrial working class in China linked up with the students and threw their weight behind the struggle for democratic rights, the entire character of the Beijing Spring would radically change. The question would be clearly posed: Who rules in China? The working people or a privileged bureaucracy?

The active involvement of workers in the May 17th demonstration suggested a dynamic that both sent shudders up the spines of the Stalinist leadership in Beijing and thrilled revolutionary Marxists the world over--an antibureaucratic rebellion, consciously led by the working class, which would retain the socialist property forms (nationalized industries, state monopoly of foreign trade, and a planned economy) while overthrowing the tyrannical rule of the privilege caste, opening up a new vista of socialist democracy. In other words, the kind of political revolution predicted by Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky in his classic analysis of Stalinism--The Revolution Betrayed.

I first read Trotsky's book after discovering the Socialist Workers Party while living in New York City in late 1977. It was the United Mine Workers strike that galvanized me to take my socialist convictions a step further and check out a Marxist organization. As a left wing student activist at Georgetown University, my politics had ranged from working from George McGovern's presidential campaign in 1972 to expressing sympathies for the Weather Underground, a group of urban guerrilla revolutionaries in the United States who bombed government buildings in the late '60s and early '70s. After graduating in 1975, I moved to New York and considered myself a democratic socialist of the Michael Harrington stripe.

But the 1977-78 strike by the mine workers convinced me that Harrington's brand of reformism had little to offer miners or any other workers in the life and death of the class struggle. I remembered how attracted I was to a New York Times column written by the Socialist Workers Party mayoral candidate during the 1976 campaign. Then in December 1977, I ran into an SWP member hawking the party's newspaper, the Militant, on a Greenwich Village street. Impressed by its coverage of the coal miners strike, I bought the paper and learned of a public forum on the strike that the Militant was sponsoring the next evening.

The forum speaker was a young party member who gave a fascinating eyewitness account of his visit with striking coal miners in West Virginia. I had a stimulating discussion with several members and before leaving I purchased three books--The History of American Trotskyism and Socialism on Trial, both written by SWP founder James P. Cannon, and Trotsky's The Revolution Betrayed.

Cannon had been a leader of the American Communist Party in the 1920s who was expelled for his pro-Trotsky views. While visiting Canada in 1928, Cannon read Trotsky's Draft Programme of the Left Opposition, which criticized Stalin's domestic and foreign policies, especially pertaining to China, where Stalin had disarmed the Chinese Communists and led them right into the bloody hands of Chiang Kai Shek's Kuomintang. Cannon agreed with Trotsky's analysis that Stalin was abandoning Lenin's revolutionary internationalism and succumbing to a more nationalist, conservative, chauvinist foreign policy that was too eager to subordinate the interests of the workers and the world revolution in order to make peace with international capitalism.

Devouring these books over the next few days transformed my entire life. I became a revolutionary Marxist, a strong supporter of the Socialist Workers Party, and a Trotskyist, in that I embraced the Russian revolutionary's analysis and critique of Stalinism--where it came from and where it was going. Suddenly, socialist politics had a solid historical and scientific basis. Communism made sense, as did Trotsky's analysis of how the revolution in the Soviet Union had degenerated when the privileged bureaucratic caste, led by Stalin, smashed Leninism and seized political power, wielding it through totalitarian terror.

Trotsky's scholarly analysis in The Revolution Betrayed showed that Stalin's success in ruthlessly consolidating power while defeating Trotsky's Left Opposition was not merely a matter of Stalin's superior capacity for cunning. Stalin's bureaucracy came to power in the Soviet Union due to the isolation of the young Soviet republic when the international socialist revolution failed to extend to any of the advanced capitalist countries, particularly Germany. It triumphed because of the extreme poverty and backwardness of the country, already devastated by World War I and the 1917-1921 civil war, which had wiped out much of the industrial working class, further shifting the class relationship of forces in favor of the petty bourgeoisie, the peasants, and against the industrial workers.

Thus, the material conditions for a privileged bureaucracy to emerge were ripe in the Soviet Union of the 1920s. Scarcity breeds inequality, Trotsky pointed out, and in the Soviet Union, that led to the counterrevolutionary political triumph of a petty bourgeois caste over the working people of that country.

Trotsky explained, however, that while the ascension to power of this caste represented a political counterrevolution, the social and economic conquests gained through the Bolsheviks' expropriation of the capitalists and landlords remained intact. The Stalinist caste was a parasitic creature, feeding off the workers state, taking the lion's share of the social surplus product. It was a reactionary political formation that was an obstacle to the development of socialism, because it forcibly blocked the active participation by the workers and farmers of the country. Its politics and perspective were narrow, chauvinist, and nationalist, abandoning Leninism's internationalism and serving as a transmission belt into the country for imperialism's values.

Trotsky further explained that the only way the Soviet workers and peasants could advance toward socialism was through a political revolution that overthrew the bureaucracy and established socialist democracy. While his analysis dealt specifically with the Soviet Union, it was applied correctly by the SWP to those nations where capitalism was overturned in the 1940s: the Eastern European Warsaw Bloc countries and China. In these countries, Stalinist-led communist parties had expropriated the capitalists, nationalized the industries, and established planned economies and state monopolies of foreign trade, forming the basis of socialist property relations. But these workers states were born with already bureaucratically deformed leaderships. The Soviet Union began with a healthy, revolutionary, internationalist leadership under Lenin, but saw its revolution degenerate due to the betrayal by the nationalist-chauvinist Stalinists.

There was a major difference, however, between the socialist revolutions in the Warsaw Bloc countries and China, as Socialist Workers Party documents explained. Capitalism in Eastern Europe was overturned after World War II largely from an external force--the Soviet Red Army--not from indigenous mass movements of working people. An exception was Tito's Yugoslavia, where a mass-based pro-communist Partisan force had fought the Nazis.

In China, however, Mao's Communist Party led a genuine mass movement that first fought Japanese imperialism in a war of national liberation, and then, under tremendous pressures from the US-led imperialist assault, expropriated the capitalists and landlords, establishing a state which fit Trotsky's definition of a workers state--nationalized industries, a planned economy and a state monopoly of foreign trade. This social transformation made possible important gains--expanded medical care that largely eradicated tuberculosis, diphtheria, polio and tetanus; substantial reduction of illiteracy; and a tremendous expansion in public education.

Not only was Mao schooled in Stalin's version of communism, but when he came to power, his petty bourgeois, peasant-based Communist Party merged with the army apparatus and constituted a bureaucracy that usurped political power from the Chinese workers and peasants in order to consolidate and preserve its privileged status. Efforts to stabilize this regime and harness mass unrest led to a pattern of fierce factional infighting and sharp zigzags in economic policies that have continued to this day.

All of this seemed to make sense to me. Trotsky's analysis of Stalinism struck me as scholarly and scientific. I read his collection of writings on China, and how the Chinese Trotskyists endured severe repression under Mao's regime. I was impressed by the SWP's analysis of the Chinese Revolution and Mao's leadership, and agreed with its call for a political revolution by that would establish genuine socialist democracy and development.

The SWP's critique of such disastrous events as the Great Leap Forward in the late 1950s and the Cultural Revolution in the mid-1960s also rang true. The former was a typically Stalinist, heavy-handed, administrative set of measures imposed on the people from above, consisting of Mao's ultraleft nonsense that exhorted peasants to build mini steel mills in their backyards. The latter was essentially Mao's wing of the Communist Party waging a war for political supremacy against the faction led by Deng Xiaoping, who was denounced as a "capitalist roader."

Like many other leftist radicals in the '60s and '70s, I was attracted to some degree by the Chinese Revolution; something about its clearly pronounced egalitarian character struck a responsive chord. I can still recall how impressed I was by the massive mobilizations in Tiananmen Square after Zhou en Lai's death in April 1976. These rallies became an outlet for opposition to repression and other policies, and appeared to have the backing of officials loyal to Deng. But the army crushed the protests on April 5, and Deng was removed from his party posts. I remember thinking: "Wow, if the outpouring was this tremendous for Zhou, imagine its magnitude when Mao dies!"

Obviously, I was not yet following the situation in China very closely, for in truth Mao's support was declining. When the smoke cleared after his death in September 1976, the pro-Maoist faction known as the Gang of Four, which included his widow, was ousted from power in 1978 by a rightist faction led by Deng Xiaoping, who seemed to have as many political lives as a cat.

By this time I had met the SWP and my Marxist education was well under way. I closely watched the Wall of Democracy campaign in 1978-79, when the government permitted a brief period of dissent and free expression characterized by written tracts posted all over the city's walls. I also kept up with the later pro-democracy movements of 1982 and 1986-87, which culminated in the fall of Hu Yaobang and the Deng government's retreat from "bourgeois liberalization."

It was true that these manifestations of dissent were spearheaded by students and intellectuals, but my sense was there was also smoldering discontent among the working people in both city and countryside resulting from Deng's increased reliance on free market mechanisms. This pro-capitalist bent was deepening social inequalities and widening the disparities in income and living standards. The intellectual ferment generated from the pro-democracy movements of 1978, 1982 and 1986-87 found its reflection in the moderate wing of the Chinese Communist Party, which favored political liberalization to accompany the economic liberalization the government was embarking on. Hu Yaobang, whose death sparked the 1989 student protests, was the leader of this moderate faction. After his departure, Zhao Zhang emerged as the new chief of the liberals in the party, and a hero to the students in Tiananmen Square.

1978 was an extremely interesting time to discover the Socialist Workers Party for three historically interrelated reasons. First, the SWP was beginning its "turn" to basic industry, that is, a concerted effort to plant the overwhelming majority of its members into the industrial unions with the most political and social weight: United Mineworkers, United Autoworkers, Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, rail workers in the United Transport Union, International Association of Machinists, Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union, and later meatpackers in the United Food and Commercial Workers Union. The party leadership decided that the decades-long historical detour away from the labor movement had finally ended; it was time to do what vanguard communist organizations are in business to do--build the party in the most powerful sections of the working class in order to construct a revolutionary Marxist movement in the United States that would lead the workers and farmers to take political power away from the capitalists and establish a workers and farmers government that would abolish capitalism and chart a course toward socialism.

The "historical detour" had begun in the late 1940s, after the communists were driven out of the labor movement by the witch hunt and the onset of the Cold War. The 1950s were a dismal decade for the SWP (and the other major communist party, the pro-Moscow Communist Party USA, led by Gus Hall), a time of survival and maintaining the revolutionary continuity begun by Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

Things picked up in the 1960s, beginning with the Cuban Revolution, followed by the civil rights and women's movements and the anti-Vietnam War movement that was based on the nation's college campuses. The SWP threw itself into these campaigns and recruited the most revolutionary activists from thing, but little was happening in the labor movement, and that's where communists ultimately have to be.

But by the mid- and late 1970s, the party's leadership concluded that major structural changes in the national and international capitalist economy were pushing the working class back into the center stage of world politics. The detour had come to an end. The SWP made the "turn" to industry, targeting its cadre into the most powerful industrial unions in order to forge a class struggle left wing in the labor movement. The reproletarianization of the party was under way.

The second reason 1978 was an exciting time to discover the SWP was that the party was reevaluating its relationship to both Leon Trotsky and Vladimir Lenin. The party shifted away from its previous semi-sectarian stance of calling itself a "Trotskyist" organization. In doing so, the SWP reknit its revolutionary connection to Lenin’s leadership of the Bolshevik Party and the Communist International.

Before this period, the party had slipped into a mentality that viewed everything Trotsky ever said as the gospel, including the years preceding the Russian Revolution. The lynchpin of Trotsky's theories was his "Permanent Revolution," developed as early as 1905, which said that what was on the historical agenda, even for semicolonial countries, was for the industrial working class to lead the poor peasantry in expropriating the capitalists and establishing socialist economies. Trotsky summed it up in a slogan that both called for the type of government the revolution should bring to power and gave the class content and character of the revolution: dictatorship of the proletariat.

Lenin sharply disagreed with Trotsky's Permanent Revolution theory. The Bolshevik leader saw the primary task facing communist workers was to forge an alliance with the peasantry as a whole to smash landlordism and carry out the bourgeois democratic revolution. Lenin summed it up this way: a revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. Lenin, in some sharp polemics, accused Trotsky of seriously underestimating the role of the peasantry in fighting for and carrying out the socialist revolution.

These were not insignificant differences, but for years the SWP had glossed over them. The party favored Trotsky's Permanent Revolution over Lenin's revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry. The SWP gave undue influence to the "organizational" differences between the two leaders before July 1917 when Trotsky joined the Bolshevik Party--the fact that Trotsky had failed before that time to recognize the need for a disciplined, centralized, combat party of vanguard workers to lead the workers and peasants to socialist revolution. But this organizational clash was in truth a reflection of more substantive, political differences between the two revolutionists.

By 1978, the SWP had made an honest reassessment of these matters and concluded that it was Lenin who had been more on the mark politically before 1917. Trotsky's greatest contribution to the communist movement, the party concluded, came after he finally joined the Bolsheviks in July 1917: his leadership in the October insurrection; his role in building and commanding the Red Army to victory over the Whites in the civil war; his political leadership in the Communist International; and last but probably most crucial--Trotsky's analysis of and fight against Stalinism, his titanic battle against all odds to preserve Leninism and restore the Communist Party to internationalism and socialist democracy, which culminated in his founding of the Fourth International in 1938.

Quite an impressive record. But still, it was Leon Trotsky who called himself a Leninist, and by 1978, the Socialist Workers Party was calling itself Leninist as well.

The third reason why 1978 was a fascinating time to learn about the SWP concerned its rediscovery of the Cuban Revolution. The party had correctly recognized in 1960 that for the first time since the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, a socialist revolution was led by a non-Stalinist party, by a genuinely revolutionary leadership. The party embraced the Cubans as fellow revolutionaries and threw itself into solidarity organizations defending the Cuban Revolution, most notably the Fair Play for Cuba Committee.

But over the years the SWP lost sight of developments in Cuba, and by the mid-70s had to rediscover Cuba and reorient to the Cuban Revolution. The party did a splendid job in doing so, recognizing that the Castro leadership had matured into a genuinely communist, internationalist leadership, one that was vastly different from the Stalinist bureaucrats in Moscow and Beijing. Fidel was the true leader of the communist movement internationally, not Gorbachev or Deng. Because the Soviet, Eastern European and Chinese Stalinists were turning increasingly to capitalist methods in order to shore up their privileged, bureaucratic misrule. Fidel and the Cubans, however, had begun a process of rectification, and in so doing rediscovered Che Guevera and their communist roots.

As an active supporter of the Socialist Workers Party from 1978-1985, I was privileged to be part of the 1978 anti-apartheid movement taking place on college campuses; an activist against US intervention in Central America to defending the Cuban, Grenadian and Nicaraguan revolutions; an antinuclear activist who marched for abortion rights and the Equal Rights Amendment, walked the Greyhound picket lines at the Port Authority Bus Terminal in 1983, and built solidarity for the PATCO strikers (air traffic controllers).

My association with the party gave me the chance to meet Sandinistas at the 1979 SWP National Convention in Oberlin, Ohio, be part of the defense team for Bernadette Devlin when she visited New York in 1981, and witness Daniel Ortega give his address to the United Nations General Assembly in 1984.

In 1985 I moved to San Francisco and continued to function politically as an SWP supporter, which included marching with striking Watsonville cannery workers in 1986 and defending the party?s bookstores against right wing Vietnamese thugs in San Jose, Oakland, and San Francisco in 1985. My support of the SWP had not diminished an iota over the years. I liked how it embraced Malcom X, and was impressed with how it threw itself into supporting the 1979 revolutions in Nicaragua and Grenada. Above all, I admired the SWP for its unyielding solidarity with the Cuban Revolution, and how it considered Fidel's Communist Party a sister party in the new communist international emerging from the class struggle.

In February 1989, right about the time when Beijing's students began organizing themselves, my coworkers at Bancroft-Whitney, a legal publishing firm in San Francisco, elected District 65, United Auto Workers to be our collective bargaining agent. An outspoken, open communist and partisan of the Militant newspaper became a central leader in the union organizing campaign at Bancroft-Whitney and got elected shop steward.

I wasn't the only communist operating in a leadership role in a union fight. In a far more politically important labor struggle, the Machinists at Eastern Airlines went on strike March 4th, 1989, and before long, SWP members were playing vital roles on rank and file strike committees. Important changes were going on in the world; historic fights were taking place. The Cubans and Angolans had decisively defeated the South Africans at Cuito Cuanavale, delivering a powerful blow against apartheid in southern Africa, already teetering from the pressure of the African National Congress-led liberation movement.

Meanwhile, in April 1989, Beijing's students decided to take matters into their own hands. If no one else was going to step forward and do anything, they were willing to put their bodies on the line and challenge the government to end the corruption and privilege and grant democratic rights to the people. And when thousands of students started a hunger strike in Tiananmen Square on May 13th, by May 17th, Beijing's working people were right there with them, over a million strong.

May 18th saw another huge mobilization in the square, as hunger strikers continued to fail, and marshals parted the crowd into slim lanes for ambulances to come and go. A lot happened the next day. Zhao Zhang made his sad visit to the students in the square.

"It's too late, I come too late," he told them with tears in his eyes. For he had already lost the battle against the Deng/Li Peng hardliners. Deng was well on his way toward marshalling the army units needed to clear Tiananmen Square.

Li Peng also showed up in the square, but he didn 't have much to say and left early. Later, the Prime Minister met with several student leaders who had joined the hunger strike, including the charismatic Wuer Xaxi in the Great Hall of the People, right next to the square. Wuer, still in his pajamas and very weak, interrupted Li Peng: "We don't have to listen to you, Prime Minister Li; you didn't invite us here. We invited you. And we do not want to only talk about the hunger strike. We want to get down to the main point.

"You are so old, and you can be our teacher and master. Master Li, the government must acknowledge us as a patriotic movement. " Then Wuer, always with the flair for the democratic, fainted right then and there in the Great Hall of the People. Wuer's courage was a reflection of the courage of an entire generation of young Chinese, many of whom were assembled in Tiananmen across from the Great Hall.

That same day, May 19th, President Yang Shangkun, a hardliner closely allied with Deng Xaioping, called in the army and declared martial law. The problem for Deng was that although Zhao and the moderates had been defeated internally, things hadn't been definitively communicated to all the army units. There was still a residue of factionalism in the army commanders, and Zhao's conciliatory stance toward the demonstrators and opposition to the use of force to clear them from the square still had support. By the time the army arrived in Beijing, millions of people flooded the streets and blocked it from advancing toward Tiananmen. The people, at least for the time being, had won. But Deng only needed a little more time.

I was watching all of this from San Francisco with a great deal of fascination. Instinctively I was identifying with the Chinese students and bursting with solidarity and admiration for their sheer moral courage, innocence and humanity. Every night sat glued to the TV, watching the moving footage from Tiananmen Square on CNN and the major networks' news broadcasts. I remember the night I saw Dan Rather's confrontation with governmental authorities while on the air. The city was rife with tension, martial law had been declared, and the government was threatening to pull the plug on foreign TV cameras. Rather, never one to shirk from a confrontation, did a lot of grandstanding in his defiance of the government technicians before they cut off CBS. For some strange reason, I felt a special affinity for Rather that night; some kind of journalistic solidarity with someone in danger, no doubt.

Then I really got excited upon hearing the announcement on May 20th that a Beijing Workers Autonomous Federation tent had been set up in the square. So now the workers were getting into the act in an organized way, taking advantage of the political space opened up by the mass movement occurring in Beijing. If the organization grew, and the workers assumed more of a leadership role in the pro-democracy movement, a new chapter in the political revolution could be on the agenda in China.

On May 23rd, I received a phone call from Beijing. An old college friend had been doing business there with the government for several months, trying to market American videos and arrange to distribute Chinese films in the States. But he was alone, and with the city on the verge of exploding, he was having a hard time there. He had a freelance assignment with the San Francisco Examiner that he could use some assistance with. If he made all the arrangements, could I catch the earliest flight to Beijing to join him?

Without hesitating I accepted. Three days later, armed with a visa and cassette tape recorder, I arrived at San Francisco International Airport for a 1:30 pm flight to Beijing. Not that I needed any reminder of the danger I was flying into, but before I even checked my bags there was a disturbing harbinger of things to come. I instructed my Super Shuttle driver to ask an airport attendant where Air China, the People's Republic of China's airline, was located. He directed me instead to Taiwan's China Airlines, where a man who obviously worked for the airline greeted me with a cheerful "Going to Taiwan?"

"No, no, Beijing. The People's Republic is my destination," I quickly replied.

His eyes widened in horror.

"Oh, Beijing? Oh no!" he managed. "Over there, over there," he said hurriedly, pointing to an area several airlines away from his own. I smiled to the man and apologized for the confusion. I felt the eyes of the entire crowd of Taiwanese left standing in amazement. I made my way to the Air China check-in line, and after a lengthy wait, hoisted my bags on the conveyor belt.

"Aren't you going to the wrong China?" asked the ticket clerk curiously.

"No, I'm going to Beijing," I answered firmly. On the surface it must have seemed a little crazy for an American to be traveling to Beijing on May 26th, 1989. It had been less than a week since the Chinese government had declared martial law and attempted to send army units into Beijing to end the students' occupation of Tiananmen Square. While the troops had been blocked for the time being by massive mobilizations of students, workers, and farmers, the situation was still extremely tense, as the Communist Party leadership under Deng and Li Peng were attempting to reconsolidate their power.

Though fully conscious of the possible danger ahead, there was no doubt in my mind as to the correctness of my decision to go to Beijing. I was going as an observer as well as a supporter of the students and their struggle for democratic rights. It was a big story and I wanted to see it first-hand and tell the truth about it. I felt a little like Warren Beatty in Reds, when he portrayed American journalist John Reed, who felt compelled to travel to Petrograd in October of 1917 to witness the unfolding Bolshevik Revolution. For a political activist and socialist, there was really no place else to be in May 1989 than Beijing, China to join the mass movement in Tiananmen Square.

The flight from San Francisco to Beijing lasted over 15 hours, including a stop in Shanghai, another center of the pro-democracy campaign. Most of the passengers were Asian, but there was a smattering of Americans on board as well. I talked to one guy while sitting in the Shanghai Airport during the layover. His name was Fred and he seemed friendly enough, saying he hailed from Seattle and was looking to open a travel bureau in Beijing. This struck me as a rather strange time to be opening a travel bureau in Beijing, so I was somewhat suspicious, and even more so when he kept interrogating me on why I was headed for China.

Aside from the fairly significant presence of soldiers at Shanghai Airport, nothing appeared particularly unusual there. After almost an hour we were back in the air for the last leg of the long journey. An hour later, the Air China jet landed at Beijing Airport, and as soon as I was off the plane it was clear I had arrived in a place where history was being made. The airport was bustling with chaos and tension. It seemed as if everyone was either trying to leave or frantically attempting to claim their bags.

Luckily, my friend in Beijing had sent a taxi driver to pick me up and drive me to the hotel. I guess I wasn't difficult to locate the long-haired American who looked a trifle disoriented in the midst of the madness, and before long we were in his cab and embarking on the half hour ride into the capital city of China. The Beijing night was very warm and still, and the main road was long, dark and flanked by rows of thick trees.

Occasionally we passed a bicylist, but other than that there were no visible signs of activity along the road. Suddenly the cab was being slowed down by a roadblock up ahead; but it was a roadblock manned by students, and they waved us by. Before reaching Beijing, we passed two more such roadblocks. Despite all the government's talk of martial law, this was a city where it was not yet enforced. The people seemed in control, and the students were at the helm.

As we approached Tiananmen Square, we noticed many groups of youthful demonstrators huddled together in intense meetings. My first impressions of the square that night are somewhat hazy; I was exhausted from the long flight and the first time you see something you're not always focused. I remember it was a big square but I was mesmerized by the red and yellow banners from the hundreds of colleges and universities and the many tents in the square. It was one o'clock in the morning and there were many thousands of students camped in Tiananmen Square. We drove by pretty quickly, but it was a stirring, sobering sight. I had arrived smack in the middle of a great country's history being made.

Across the wide avenue from the square, I saw for the first time the large portrait of Chairman Mao on the gate at the entrance to the Forbidden City, which the government had recently closed in reaction to the demonstrations. It was a bizarre, almost eerie scene, one that would captivate me during my stay in Beijing. It was the same portrait that had been defaced a week earlier by unknown vandals. The students, suspecting it was the work of government provocateurs, denounced the defacement and cooperated with the authorities in the arrests of three men.

Minutes later we passed Zhongnanhai compound, the Communist Party's headquarters and residence for its top leaders, and the sight of another strange image which reflected the continuing standoff between the government and the students in the nation's capital. A small contingent of soldiers, four of them sitting yoga-like, were guarding the entrance to the building, while hundreds of students and citizens held vigil in front of the compound. They were raising banners, shouting slogans, or just staring at the stoic soldiers.

I somehow learned from the taxi driver that the students had called another demonstration in the square for the next day, Sunday, May 28th. Though I had left San Francisco on Friday afternoon, my first full day in Beijing would not be until Sunday. Less than a mile from Tiananmen, the cab pulled up in front of the Minzu Hotel, a large, fairly nice establishment known to be frequented by journalists and Richard Nixon. I thanked the driver, went up to my room on the 20th floor, and called my associate in Beijing. He said that he'd arranged for me to meet Bai Zhao, a Beijing University professor active in the pro-democracy movement, the following day, and that two of his students would pick me up at the hotel at nine a.m.

As I lay in bed, the images of Tiananmen Square were running through my head: the students, banners, tents, Mao's portrait, and the bizarre scene at Zhongnanhai. I listened for sounds in the Beijing night air that would reveal the political uprising taking place. But it was a quiet summer night, and eventually I drifted off to sleep.

**Chapter 2: Sunday, May 28th**

I had no trouble getting an early start that morning with all my adrenalin flowing and the buzz in Beijing's air. I bought a few newspapers in the lobby--the International Herald Tribune and the China Daily, the English language version of the newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party--and sat down for an American-style breakfast in the dining room of the Minzu Hotel. Before venturing onto Tiananmen Square, I wanted to brief myself on the situation as thoroughly as possible, for I'd been traveling for a day and a half with no access to the latest developments in Beijing.

The papers were reporting that Li Peng was asserting control and exhorting the troops to enforce martial law; that Zhao Zhang had lost the intraparty fight to the Deng/Li hardliners and was under house arrest. I learned that National People's Congress leader Wan Li, another favorite of the pro-democracy students, had made a speech while visiting the United States praising the students' campaign for democracy as a patriotic movement. Wan's trip was suddenly cut short when he was summoned back to China. He was met in Shanghai by government officials and taken away for "medical treatment."

Meanwhile, the papers were saying that the size of the Tiananmen demonstrations had dwindled to 10-20,000, but that the students had decided to continue the occupation of the square anyway. This coincided with my impressions from my ride into Beijing the night before and the information passed on to me by the cab driver, who had also informed me the students had called a mobilization for Sunday.

Just before nine I finished breakfast and walked outside the hotel to get my first look at Beijing in the daylight. Already it was apparent that hundreds of thousands of Beijing residents were responding to the students' call for another demonstration as they marched down Changan Avenue. Changan is the major thoroughfare in Beijing, a wide street also known as the Avenue of Eternal Peace, and it passes right in front of the Minzu Hotel. Tiananmen Square was less than a mile from the Minzu, right off Changan Avenue.

Though it was Sunday, you'd swear it was the height of morning rush hour. Beijing was a teeming Asian metropolis, as throngs of citizens headed for the square on bicycles and on foot. There were some automobiles, mostly Mercedes, as well as taxicabs and the antiquated green municipal buses, but it was immediately clear that bicycles were the way to get around in Beijing.

Before long, two young women approached me on the steps of the Minzu and introduced themselves as two students sent by Professor Bai Zhao to accompany me and serve as interpreters for the day. Mai and Chiang didn't speak English very well, but they were friendly and I felt better going to Tiananmen with some company.

We joined the people headed toward the square on Changan Avenue. The atmosphere was simultaneously festive and serious. As we passed the first of three wide intersections located between the Minzu and Tiananmen, I noticed large crowds of citizens gathered around the latest proclamation from the student leaders pasted on the 1989 Walls of Democracy. Changan was packed with people as far as I was able to see, and there were all kinds of banners carried by youthful demonstrators.

We passed the strange scene at the Zhongnanhai compound. Even at this early hour, a large crowd of demonstrators was gathered outside the Communist Party headquarters. Inside the compound, seven or eight protesters were sitting right next to the small contingent of soldiers guarding the building, still in their yoga-like positions, still staring stoically into space. Banners read "Serve the People," "Down with Fascism" and "Li Peng, Resign" were held or placed in the mouths of the two lion statues in front of Zhongnanhai. Some demonstrators were just staring at the squatting soldiers; others were taking their cues from agitators with loudspeakers and chanting their slogans with a fierce passion.

The bizarre scene illuminated the standoff between the government and the students. How long could this go on? The students had dealt the Party leadership several damaging blows: embarrassing it by upstaging the Gorbachev visit, proposing to publicly broadcast any talks between the students and the government, demanding that the top party bureaucrats disclose all of their assets and privileges, the ongoing encampment in Tiananmen Square in defiance of the authorities; all of this had been taking place for nearly six weeks before my arrival. Where was Li Peng's martial law? Aside from the small group of unarmed soldiers guarding Zhongnanhai, where were the soldiers? Or, for that matter, where were the police? At this point in time anyway, Beijing truly belonged to its people.

Slowly we made our way through the crowds toward Tiananmen Square. I was surrounded by Chinese of every age. Entire families had decided to spend their Sunday outing in Tiananmen. All along the route there were students speaking to attentive audiences over loudspeakers. One demonstrator spoke with particular intensity, and the crowd responded with equally enthusiastic fervor. Just before the square I saw evidence of the hunger strike for the first time time—pup tents set up on the sidewalk bordering the Avenue of Eternal Peace. I poked my head inside one of them and saw a young woman, no older than her late teens, lying motionless and barely conscious, faint and weakened from lack of nourishment. I had thought that the hunger strike was over by that time, but apparently there was still a small group of students holding out.

Finally we arrived at the opening to the square. I wasn’t quite prepared for the spectacle before me. Tiananmen is the largest public square I’d ever seen, easily the size of 10 Times Squares. In the middle I noticed a tall, imposing, granite structure raised atop a series of steps. Mai told me this was the Monument of the People’s Heroes. The square was already filled with many tens of thousands of demonstrators, and there were red, yellow and white banners everywhere, representing all of the colleges and universities participating in the pro-democracy movement.

I remained at the entrance of Tiananmen for a few minutes, taking it all in.

There was a succession of parades marching into the square; joyous students proudly marching under the banners of their schools, surrounded by Beijing’s citizens cheering them on. One demonstrator carried a picture of Li Peng wearing a necklace of skeletons and surrounded by tanks.

“Down with Corruption” read a banner being carried right past me, and the people applauded enthusiastically. The crowd clapped as the students marched by chanting, “If we don’t achieve our purpose, we’re not leaving!”, “Long live understanding”, “Patriotism is no crime” and “Down with Fascism!”

Everyone seemed to be waving the V-for-victory peace sign, so for a moment I had the distinct impression I was at an antiwar demonstration in the States. “Rulers of the East, wake up! We’re not afraid of anything!” Throngs of curious but supportive onlookers on bicycles rode past the square’s entrance as a student propaganda van drove by with the Internationale, the communist anthem, blaring from the loudspeakers. A student carried a sign reading “I’ll sacrifice myself to call up the soul of the nation.”

Thousands of people were in the street approaching the square’s entrance. Speakers were reading declarations to large crowds, and hundreds of contingents of student marchers kept filing into Tiananmen from all directions, to nonstop cheers and applause.

As soon as I set foot in Tiananmen Square I again heard the unmistakeable strains of “The Internationale” coming from loudspeakers set up on poles throughout the square. The V-for-Victory sign was omnipresent—on buttons, shirts and banners.

The Internationale stopped me in my tracks; it seemed the only proper thing for a good communist to do. I guess I wasn’t prepared to hear the communist anthem so quickly, but it was a rather moving moment. Somehow the students and citizens massing in the square didn’t seem like counterrevolutionaries with that kind of background music accompanying them.

I stopped and a small group of demonstrators surrounded me with intense curiosity. One young man stepped forward.

“Where you from?” he asked.

“San Francisco, United States,” I replied.

“Aah, San Francisco,” he repeated. Then he handed me a small notebook and pen, motioning for me to sign it. When I obliged him with a smile, another youthful protester gave me his pad and pen. We must have been some sight—an American in the middle of Tiananmen Square besieged by friendly student demonstrators asking for his autograph. I had come half way around the world to witness history being made in China and the students were treating me as the celebrity. If they didn’t have pads or paper, they asked me to sign right on their jackets. Students continued to ask where I was from; sometimes I said San Francisco, other times the answer was New York. Most seemed familiar with those two cities, but to several both were mysteries.

“I’m a journalist from the United States, and I support your struggle for democracy and freedom. I’m here to report back to the people in the United States the truth about your movement,” I explained, knowing I was understood by only some of those surrounding me.

I was overwhelmed by the warm smiles, embraces and pats on my back. To the students I was the celebrity—an American who had made his way to the square was special in their eyes, especially an American journalist, as my tape recorder gave me away. Indeed, a journalist in the square was a VIP to the pro-democracy Chinese students, for here was a chance to break through the lies of the government and tell their story directly to the world.

Shaking my head and smiling, I signed a few more autographs, and in the background a war of the loudspeakers was taking place—students broadcasting over the speakers in the square were competing with the government spokesperson’s voice emanating from the speakers across the way near Chairman Mao’s portrait by the Forbidden City.

Finally, the crowd around me broke up and I moved on. But the stares from bewildered Chinese continued to follow me. That first day it seemed everyone in China was staring at me, but not in a hostile manner. The looks on their faces were of curiosity and wonder.

Mai, Chiang and I made our way through the masses of students and legions of tents to the Monument of the People’s Heroes in the middle of Tiananmen Square. Hundreds of red and yellow banners surrounded the monument and tents, and speeches were constantly broadcast from the loudspeakers. Mounted on top of the lightpoles was a revealing sight—video cameras, apparently put there by the government to spy on demonstrators, had been rendered dysfunctional and covered up with rags by the students.

It was a hot, sweltering day and as we waded through the dense crowd I realized that the sanitation facilities were inadequate for the task at hand. Tight security surrounded the tents nearest the Monument; here was the command center of the student leaders, for inside these tents were fax and linotype machines, broadcast equipment and medical supplies. The speeches heard throughout Tiananmen were coming from one tent which served as a makeshift public address system. I climbed to the top tier of the Monument and looked out over the crowd of at least 100,000. The peace sign was everywhere and with the Internationale playing in the background, the atmosphere was a poignant combination of Woodstock and the anti-Vietnam War demonstrations of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The chanting and sloganeering that had accompanied the demonstrators marching into Tiananmen had been replaced by a more somber, silent mood.

But all was not quiet, for the War of the Loudspeakers was escalating in Tiananmen Square. There were actually two wars going on: the major one between the government’s broadcasts from the Forbidden City and the student speeches in the square, and a friendlier competition among various Tiananmen speakers. Mai told me that the government spokesperson was imploring the students to leave the square, that the turmoil must end and the students must go back to school, be loyal and build the nation. She said that the student speakers were calling for more democracy and freedom, with one speaker saying something about the legalization of multiparties in China. I asked Mai if she knew of any discussion among the student leaders as to whether they would continue the protests in the square. She said that the day before a smaller group of students had proposed staging a final rally in Tiananmen on Tuesday before returning to their schools.

We walked to the east side of the square, the side that bordered the Revolutionary Museum of History. I was causing quite a stir, partly because I was a Westerner and partly due to my tape recorder. Before long, we had attracted the attention of Wan, a prominent student leader from a university in Inner Mongolia. He agreed to an interview, and with his small entourage we found a suitable location for a talk—under the cover of a leafy tree between the square and the Museum.

Wan was a portly, serious yet pleasant young man who moved as if he carried a heavy weight on his shoulders. His interest in talking with an American journalist was tempered by a distinct caution, for there were undercover agents lurking about, and trust was not in large supply in the square. Surrounded by his friends and other students, Wan joined Mai and I under the tree. He crossed his legs yoga style, and Mai said she was ready to translate, and I turned on the tape recorder.

“When did you first arrive at Tiananmen Square, and what are your immediate plans?” I asked Wan.

“We arrived on May 16th, and we are now in the process of considering leaving the square, because there is a certain necessity for leaving. But it’s also imperative that we remain, so the student leaders are in the process of determining what would be the best thing to do.”

“Have you heard anything in terms of what the government is planning to do?”

Wan replied, “Ever since the last dialogue was cut off, the methods of communicating or having any dialogue with the government are extremely few.”

“That’s as far as direct dialogue, but have you heard any reports, rumors, etc?” I queried.

“Basically, no communication is going on whatsoever, not only at the highest levels, but even the levels below. There’s really no access to what’s going on for the students or for the press,” said Wan. He spoke with a quiet, firm determination, and he appeared to command the respect of the other students.

I then said to him, “It seems the danger to the students is very low at this point, in terms of staying here in Tiananmen Square. Is that what the students feel, or do they believe they’re in a lot of danger?”

Wan answered, “This is a patriotic, democratic movement, and if the government would use force against the patriotic, democratic movement, it would be just too disappointing and very unwise.”

I asked him, “Have you heard anything about the formation of an independent labor union federation, and what are the prospects for forging a worker-student alliance to move the pro-democracy movement forward?”

Wan replied, “This student movement has inspired and moved all the people at all levels of society, so for the workers to be involved is absolutely imperative. But it’s not very well organized at this point; some groups that are organizing are not really for the benefit of the people.”

I wasn’t completely satisfied with this answer. I was looking for some concrete information about the Beijing Workers Autonomous Federation which was reported to have set up a tent on the square the week before. I pressed Wan further on this.

“But have you heard about the Beijing Workers Autonomous Federation? It was reported about in the Western press, in the United States.”

Wan responded, “The workers have very good intentions and they are very supportive of the students and the needs of the people and they’ve come together and organized.”

At that point Mai interjected. She spoke to Wan for a minute, then turned to me and said: “I tried to give him the example of Solidarity in Poland, but he thinks they have something different.”

It was clear that was all Wan wished to say on the subject, or all that he knew on the matter of the workers federation. It was a reasonable assumption that no specific ties has yet been established between the students and the Beijing Workers Autonomous Federation, but it also seemed true that Wan was at least aware of its existence. I tried a different line of questioning.

“Do you know what time the student meeting is going to be?”

Wan replied, “Where and when it is going to take place I don’t know, but there definitely needs to be a meeting and they all need to participate. They have to get together themselves and decide what the next step is going to be."

I continued: “Okay, but obviously they have to decide soon. What about yesterday’s report that the students were going to leave the square by Tuesday? Is that still operative?”

“As far as I know I think it’s a rumor, at least my organization has not made such a decision, and I don’t think the Beijing students or any of the other student organizations have made such a decision either. I want to emphasize that Wang Dan and Wuer Xa’xi, two of the central student leaders, cannot necessarily represent all the desires of the students.”

This was my first awareness of divisions in the student camp. I took Wan’s comment to mean that Wang and Wuer favored withdrawing from the square, while many students wanted to continue the occupation. I asked him how many students were in Tiananmen Square.

“We represent 317 universities,” he began. “It’s hard to say how many people because people are coming and going all the time. I think at the most, 200,000. There is a need for leaving. If you look at the purpose of this there are two: 1) arouse the people; and 2) push the government to make decisions beneficial to the people. That’s our highest hope and most altruistic hope, most sincere. The first we’ve already accomplished. The second we’ve lost.”

Sensing his disappointment over this failure to achieve the second objective, I said to Wan, “You have not only aroused the people in China but people all over the world as well.”

Wan smiled and said he was proud of the Chinese people for that. “We know it will take a long time to achieve democracy. To achieve full democracy is not possible out of one or two movements. It will take a long time.”

In the background, the government spokesperson droned from the Heavenly Gate loudspeakers. But the people weren’t listening to that speaker; it was the students’ voices who Beijing’s citizens were listening to now.

Though we had tried to conduct the interview in an inconspicuous manner by choosing the cover provided by the thick-leaved tree, a curious crowd was gethering around us, straining for a view.

I continued: “Wan, the U.S. government and the Western press are distorting the pro-democracy movement for their own reasons. They are presenting this movement as proof that communism has failed. But I get the impression so far from talking to people and hearing the Internationale that the Chinese people do not want to overthrow communism but they want to make it better. Is that true?”

 “Communism is centered in the Western world,” answered the student leader.

“As the students grow up we learn that Marxism is a good dream to struggle for, a noble ideal. We should struggle for it. The main goal of the students’ movement is to arouse the patriotic passion of the people.”

“But what were the short-term goals of the students?” I asked.

“More democracy,” he replied.

But concretely, what actions by the government would satisfy the students?” I pressed.

“As much as possible. The aim is to get closer to democracy,” Wan said.

I was getting frustrated with this line of question and answering. “What does democracy mean to you?” I asked him.

“Freedom of the press, speech, assembly and participation in government,” he answered quickly.

“What do you know about Revolutionary Cuba?”

“Very little,” Wan responded.

I told him the Cubans had the right to recall any government official at any time and elect someone else in his place. Did the Chinese enjoy that same right?

“No, no, that’s what we are struggling for!” laughed Wan. He motioned to his friends that the interview was over. I thanked him for taking time to talk with me and wished him and the pro-democracy movement success. Then Wan and his entourage were gone, and my friends and I returned to Tiananmen.

There must have been 125-150,000 people in and around the square, a large turnout, but not as massive as the million-strong demonstrations earlier in May. The workers in the city still supported the students and their demands for democracy, but there was a sense that the movement, which had been going on for six weeks, was now ebbing. Mai informed me that the Communist Party was putting intense pressure on the workers not to join the demonstrations in Tiananmen Square or they would risk losing their bonuses or even their jobs.

It was late afternoon but the Beiing sun was still unbearably hot, and as we walked back through the square the mounting piles of garbage were hard to ignore. But the speeches could still be heard from the loudspeakers, and there were still many demonstrators milling about the square. We reached the Avenue of Eternal Peace and walked down a steep set of stairs which led to a subway-like underpass that was filled with an eclectic mix of demonstrators, street people camping out, and stragglers of all kinds. The scene reminded me of similar images from New York and San Francisco. Beijing in 1989 was a teeming Asian metropolis rife with contradictions—a hybrid of new and old, socialist and capitalist, East and West. In terms of social and economic development, the city appeared to be halfway between New York and Hanoi.

But the biggest contradiction was the martial law that wasn’t. That is, everyone knew the army was right outside Beijing’s limits, but there was not a single visible sign of governmental authority, except for the traffic police at the major intersections. The people were running the city, the students occupied the square, and everything seemed to be running just fine. For a city rife with protests, a strange calm permeated Beijing.

Before returning to the Minzu that evening, I decided “when in Beijing, do what the Chinese do”: ride a bicycle. I found a rental place further down Changan Avenue not far from the Beijing Hotel. You haven’t truly ridden a bike until you’ve done so alongside a few hundred thousand people. Changan is a wide avenue with bicycle lanes on both sides, and the competition for space can sometimes be very intense. When I was able to divert my attention from the road in front of me, I could see some of Beijing’s contradictions. There were tall, modern skyscrapers and hotels next to old, decaying buildings; there were new housing projects for workers and poor, dilapidated houses belonging to the part of the city known as “Old Beijing.”

Back in my room Sunday evening, I thought about my first day in Tiananmen Square. My conversation with Wan had left me somewhat frustrated. It was increasingly clear that the students were on a collision course with the government, like a game of “chicken” was occurring in Beijing, with only one side holding lethal weapons. I started to come to grips with the fact that for all of the spontaneous support for the students being shown by the working people, this movement was essentially politically leaderless. The students were serving as the moral conscience of China, but they were making no pretenses that they had all the answers. The students possessed no blueprint for a new order; they were not raising the question of who should run China.

Wan had said that the two main goals of the students were to arouse the Chinese people and force the government to change its policies. He conceded that the latter objective had failed, and in the face of the government’s increasingly ominous warnings to clear the square and end the turmoil and threats to socialism, he seemed to favor continuing the occupation of Tiananmen, because it would be too “unwise and disappointing for the government to attack this patriotic movement.”

To a foreigner who had only just arrived, this seemed rather naive, as it also apparently did to some of the student leaders who were arguing to leave the square. I got the sense from my conversation with Wan that the two sides were growing further apart with no chance of a dialogue. The army was outside the city, Zhao was nowhere in sight and rumored to be under house arrest, Communist Party conservatives were warning of a plot aimed at toppling Deng, and Deng and Li Peng appeared to be consolidating their power.

A radical faction of the students was also hardening its position, defiantly vowing to remain in the square. More significantly, there were calls in Tiananmen that day for Li Peng’s resignation, along with a poster depicting Li with skeletons draped around his neck. Perhaps some of the students were still buoyed from the previous week’s victory—when Beijing’s masses blocked the army from reaching the square. Maybe others still had faith in Wan Li being able to convene an emergency session of the National People’s Congress.

I thought about some of the slogans and chants Mai had translated and what they showed concerning the range of opinions in the pro-democracy movement: “Patriotism is no crime,” “Long live understanding,” and “Down with Fascism.” While some may have been more militant than others, the overall mood of the demonstrators was peaceful and moderate. The people were demanding radical reforms and more democracy, but it was clearly within the framework of the existing system. I didn’t see or hear anyone calling for the overthrow of socialism or the Communist Party.

I realized from that first day that the language barrier was going to be a problem While Mai and Chiang had been a big help in translating some of the banners and chants and hooking me up with Wan, their assignment to assist me was over. Although the V for Victory sign was universal and I had seen a banner reading “We Shall Overcome” in English, there was a great deal going on that I could infer only from mood and spirit. I had the feeling that the pro-democracy campaign needed a spark to counter the government’s strategy of wearing the students down and dividing them from Beijing’s working people. Questions were nagging me: Where was the movement going? And where was the Beijing Autonomous Workers Federation (BAWF)?

I was disappointed that I had not come across any signs of BAWF. I knew they were somewhere in Tiananmen, but I had made no progress that day in locating them, and Wan wasn’t able or willing to contribute any concrete information about the independent union.

Before retiring Sunday evening I called my friend in Beijing and told him about the day’s events. He informed me that we had some business to attend to during the day on Monday, but on tap for the evening was dinner with Professor Bai from Beijing University, whose command of English was excellent. Maybe Professor Bai would know more about BAWF. Headed for the Square

**Chapter 3: Monday, May 29th**

At breakfast in the Minzu dining hall I plunged into the newspaper accounts of Sunday's demonstration and the latest developments in the Communist Party. The Herald Tribune reported that the students had decided to continue the occupation of Tiananmen Square at least until the June 20th scheduled meeting of the National People's Congress, winning out over the smaller group of students who had called for a final rally on Tuesday before returning to their classes. Wan must have been pleased with the decision to stay in the square.

I learned that both the government's television news and the Xinhua press agency did not deem Sunday's demonstration newsworthy enough to tell its citizens about. This was undoubtedly a signal that the Party was beginning to exercise more control over journalists, as Deng must not have been amused to learn that reporters for the People's Daily had marched in Sunday's demonstration demanding more freedom of the press. Deng must also not have been thrilled about reports coming in from all over China that pro-democracy protests were breaking out in Shanghai, Canton, Chengdu, Xian and other areas. Beijing's spark was igniting and threatening to erupt into a prairie fire across China.

The press accounts of the internal party struggle between Deng and Zhao reflected the conflicting signals emanating from Beijing. One article reported that Zhao Zhang was being attacked in internal documents circulated in "work units" around the country, amidst speculation that he would be dismissed for leading an antiparty clique. Another article's theme trumpeted that the party's moderates were down but not out; that Deng and Li had persuaded the Politburo to move against Zhao and the students, but were having a difficult time convincing other Party officials to fall in line. It said that Zhao still had the support of some army officers who were reluctant to enforce martial law in Beijing. The article suggested that the mass support for the students was preventing Deng from officially ousting Zhao from his position as Party leader.

Meanwhile, the government's propaganda offensive against the students was escalating in the pages of the People's Daily, but it too reflected the strength of the mass movement. Conscious of the strong support from Beijing's citizens for the pro-democracy campaign, the Party was now taking great pains to characterize the overwhelming majority of the students as "patriotic and well intentioned." The real threat to China's stability came from a small group of conspirators who were behind the pro-democracy protests, manipulating the honest intentions of the students for their own pernicious goals of overthrowing the Party and establishing a capitalist government.

Peng Zhen, former Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, was assigned by the Central Committee the task of calling a meeting of the vice-chairmen of the Standing Committee to discuss the crisis facing the government. Peng told the meeting the student demonstrations were held out of "good, pure, kindhearted and constructive motives. Their objective is to overcome the shortcomings and mistakes in our work, and to better the country and the socialist cause. This is consistent with what we demand. However, their ways and means are not so proper. They are not so familiar with the laws. As they lack political experience, they do not have enough vigilance against the very small number of conspirators and bad elements who take advantage of the situation to create turmoil."

Peng went on to say that the Constitution and the laws should provide the basis for unifying people's thinking on current issues, and he asked the vice-chairmen to try to find ways to unite the students and the people around the Communist Party to end the chaos and restore order. The vice-chairmen expressed concern over the chaos generated by the protests, and reaffirmed support for the leadership of the Party and a return to stability. But some of them declared that the students' patriotic enthusiasm should be fully affirmed and protected, that their reasonable demands on many issues should be seriously considered, and a clear distinction should be made between the masses and the small number of conspirators.

The same theme was picked up by the Supreme People's Court in a companion article. While expressing firm support for the Party's decisions in keeping the social order, it sounded like the government was trying to co-opt the students' demands. An official from the Court declared that the patriotic enthusiasm of the students was sound and reasonable, and what they have advocated--fighting official profiteering, punishing corruption and promoting democracy and prosperity--conformed with the goals of the Party and the government.

While all this was going on in the government, the people of Beijing had their own ideas. As I rode my bicycle down a very congested Changan Avenue, I discovered there was more to the pro-democracy movement than the protests in Tiananmen Square. At each of the wide intersections along Changan, large crowds were reading the latest proclamations from the students posted on walls and buildings. People were talking politics on every street corner, and the entire city seemed excited about something, although lacking an interpreter I had no idea what the buzz was about.

But one didn't have to know Chinese to grasp that Beijing was a city politicized, whose populace was taking advantage of the political opening already won by the mass movement. The early momentum of the student protests had caught the government off guard, and while Deng and Li Peng were preparing the counterattack, the working people of Beijing were making the most of the breathing room provided by the mobilizations. Consciously blocked from actively participating in the life of the country, the people were embracing the opportunity to engage in political discussion, talk freely in the streets and the press, and assemble for a redress of their grievances.

The business with my friend in Beijing took me into the basement of the city's TV and Radio Ministry building to watch classic footage from old films of the People's Liberation Army dug up from the archives. The government bureaucrat assigned to work with us was visibly nervous about the demonstrations and did his dutiful best to downplay their significance.

"It is all very complicated," Mr. Xing kept repeating, and I agreed with him.

After several hours of viewing footage of Mao's Great March across China and the People's Liberation Army fighting the Japanese imperialist forces, I returned to the Minzu to prepare for my dinner meeting with Professor Bail. The hotel staff on the 27th floor were very friendly and engaging young fellows, especially when I gave them miniature American flags and baseball cards. They didn't speak any English, but something about them gave me the impression that they were supporters of the pro-democracy campaign. Although they weren't exactly strangers to Western journalists, they seemed intrigued over any American journalist covering this particular historical event taking place in their country.

I biked to the Beijing Hotel to meet Professor Bai for dinner. He met me in the lobby and I liked him immediately. A handsome, pleasant man in his mid-forties, Bai looked like he was in a state of idealized euphoria from the dizzying events taking place in Beijing. I could tell right away Bai was right in the middle of the movement at Beijing University, for he had that glazed, far away look on his intelligent face. He spoke rapidly, with short staccato bursts of sentences.

"The students have called another demonstration in Tiananmen Square for this evening. Something big is happening. An arts and crafts festival. Students from local art colleges made some kind of statue of freedom. They?re bringing it into the square tonight."

I asked him for the latest news from the students.

"Beijing University students are sending teams of agitators around China," Bai said breathlessly. "Five teams of agitators are going all over the country, spreading the pro-democracy message. Students from all over China are coming to Tiananmen Square, and we are sending students to other provinces around China."

"Professor Bai, can you tell me anything about the Beijing Autonomous Workers Federation?" I asked him.

"Yes, yes, of course," Bai answered excitedly. "They arrested three activists from the independent labor union. People are very angry."

Over dinner I learned that at a demonstration on Beijing University's campus led by Professor Bai, a number of his students had been beaten by baton-wielding policemen.

Bai said: "Yes, yes, it was terrible. And unprovoked. Unprovoked. They bloodied four of my students. They were only demonstrating."

After dinner, I took a taxi with Professor Bai down the Avenue of Eternal Peace to the square. Bai told me that the driver was an enthusiastic supporter of the students and their democratic demands.

 "He's heard about the arts and crafts festival in the square this evening," said Bai excitedly. "And look, everyone in Beijing is going!"

It sure looked that way. The closer we got to Tiananmen Square, the more people were filling up the avenue. Tens of thousands of Beijing citizens were headed for Tiananmen on bicycles and foot. The mood was decidedly more upbeat than it had been the previous day.

Bai continued: "I expect a dramatic change in the political structure in the next few days. The document condemning Zhao has been withdrawn. That's a good sign. I have some connections with Zhao?s son-in-law. But I could not get in touch with him recently."

We talked briefly about the government's strategy of calling the students patriotic and well intentioned as a whole while targeting the leaders as troublemakers.

Bai said: "That's right. And the students are saying to the leaders, 'you are the troublemakers. You are the handful of people who have created chaos.' And they are saying a handful of small people are trying to make chaos. You are patriotic. Repeating the same propaganda. Because tonight, there are so many people. Another highlight. Another great moment. Hundreds of thousands are in the square tonight."

When we were still a few blocks from Tiananmen Square we got out of the cab to join the teeming masses on foot. Professor Bai led the way, hurriedly talking as we went.

"One hundred scholars will be on hunger strike tomorrow. High ranking scholars. That would be a heavy blow. If they die, then the whole world will be in anger. Of course, there would be great loss for those people. As for me, I'm not so. . .I. . .I better not. Maybe that's the only way out."

I was practically jogging in order to keep up with the frenetic Professor Bai. His energy fit in well with the charged excitement permeating the warm Beijing evening. As we approached the square, I realized that I was getting caught up in it all as well. It looked like 200,000 people were jamming in and around Tiananmen. You just had the feeling something big was happening that night. The people felt like they had the government on the run again, for it was another massive outpouring and the army with its martial law was nowhere in sight.

As we reached the square, the sea of pedestrians and bicyclists continued flowing into it. Bai translated what was being said on the loudspeakers: "The announcer is repeating Li Peng's statement justifying martial law while calling the students patriotic. The People's Congress will meet in June.?"

Our objective was to reach the students' headquarters located near the Monument of the People 's Heroes at the center of Tiananmen, where Bai hoped to hook me up with a student leader. Bai parted the crowd as if he were Moses parting the Red Sea. I followed a few steps behind him, amazed at his natural leadership abilities. It was easy to see why he was so popular both in the pro-democracy movement and with his students at Beijing University.

It was difficult to keep focused on what was happening; visually, my head was spinning from the swirl of multicolored flags and banners blanketing Tiananmen Square, and the bicycles, bike carts and the vendors selling orange soda pop. In the audio realm, I was overwhelmed by the sounds of bicycle bells ringing and the War of the Loudspeakers taking place throughout the square and across the way by the Heavenly Gate to the Forbidden City, where the government spokesperson repeated Premier Li Peng's latest statement over the huge speakers near Mao's portrait. The sing-song tone of the government spokesperson emanating from Chairman Mao's presence made it all seem like a scene from an Orwellian fantasy.

I was jarred back to reality by the sound of Bai's raised voice. "Nivek! This way! Come!"

Looking up ahead, I realized I'd fallen back quite a ways from Professor Bai.

"Okay!" I yelled back, picking up the pace.

"Okay! Okay!" came the echoes from the students in the crowd. This was the beginning of an extremely amusing phenomena that occurred all week in the square. Chinese students are fascinated with the English language, and they would show it by playfully repeating words that were amusing to them. "Fantastic!" was another popular favorite.

As we got closer to the Monument, I noticed that everyone was sitting down. Bai was negotiating with several students about letting me through. A student said to me: "America. United States."

 "Yes, I'm from San Francisco. Also New York." I was having a hard time making up my mind which city I should say I was from, so sometimes I resolved things by mentioning both.

"New York," repeated the young Chinese man.

As we approached the students' headquarters, we heard singing coming out of the square's loudspeakers. I was trying hard not to be distracted by the steady stream of eyes trained on me wherever I went. Someone asked who I was.

 "I'm a journalist from the United States," I managed to reply.

Finally, we reached the concentration of tents surrounding the Monument of the People's Heroes, headquarters of the students' pro-democracy campaign. After several minutes of intense n negotiations with several students, Professor Bai bade me an unexpected good-bye.

"I must return home to my wife and family," he said almost apologetically. "She is very worried about me being so involved with everything. You understand."

"Oh yes, I understand very well," I said with a laugh.

"I'll leave you in the hands of these students. They know me. Good luck to you. Call me in a few days."

"I will, and thanks for everything, Professor Bai. Take care of yourself."

And then he was gone. I was sad to leave him so early, and sobered by the fact that I was in the middle of Tiananmen Square and on my own. One of the students Bai had bequeath to me, a young woman named Li, began escorting me somewhere. She told him that one of the commanders of the students movement was in the square that night. The only name I was familiar with was Wuer X'axi, and I asked Li if he was the commander she referred to.

Li's face brightened with a smile, happy that I was familiar with the student movement.

"No, not Wuer X'axi. Wang Dan."

"Oh yes, Wang Dang," I repeated, remembering that Wan, the Inner Mongolian student leader, had mentioned that name in the same breath as Wuer's.

We continued making our way forward until a student monitor stopped us at what appeared to be the final security line before headquarters.

"I'm a journalist," I told him.

The student repeated "journ-al-ist" in mangled English, before letting us through. Then we were met by another group of students, who didn't appear to be thrilled with my presence. One of them stepped forward and began interrogating me in Chinese.

Remembering my New York City roots, I figured I'd better start thinking fast.

"I'm with Shanghai Television," I managed to reply. I pulled out a Shanghai Television sticker that my Beijing associate had given me. "I'm a journalist from the United States, from San Francisco."

"Aah, San Francisco," repeated a student.

"CBS?" asked another student.

"No, not CBS," I said with a smile, remembering the government's pull-the-plug on Dan Rather incident. "I'm here to cover the demonstration, and perhaps to talk to some student leaders. That's all. Do you speak English? No?" I turned to Bai's student and said: "Tell them I respect the authority of the student leaders. I support the demonstration and I only wish to cover it. I'm here in solidarity with you and I want to report on that basis. I want to tell the American people the truth about your fight for democracy."

But the students apparently were not satisfied. Through my interpreter, they said they wanted to seem my press pass. All I had was the Shanghai Television badge, so I worked that for all it was worth. Luckily, my situation had attracted quite a bit of attention from the surrounding crowd, some of whom had seen me earlier with Professor Bai. It was only because they argued so vociferously in my behalf was I finally allowed through the security line before the Monument. I turned around and realized that my interpreter was gone; I was on my own again, with no apparent access to any student leaders. I decided to scale the steps to the top tier of the Monument area for a birds'-eye of the demonstration.

An inspiring sight greeted me, for the square was completely filled that Monday evening. Students, working people, families of all ages, showed up in Tiananmen Square, responding to the students' call for a mobilization for democratic rights. Everyone seemed confident, determined and disciplined amidst the red, blue and yellow banners. Right below the Monument was the intense concentration of tents I had seen the day before--the headquarters for the Tiananmen students, where all sorts of frenetic activity was going on: communications, medical care, liaisons with the students at Beijing's campuses.

Suddenly a convoy of trucks filled with food and other supplies drove up to the tents. Demonstrators began unloading the trucks and carrying the bags on their shoulders back to the tents. It seemed like all segments of society were pitching in to help the students--workers, vendors, shop owners, and farmers. The government statements characterizing the movement as a counterrevolutionary rebellion in no way squared with the reality before me.

When I descended to the base of the Monument my interpreter-friend, whose name was Li, had reappeared. I told her I was struck by the discipline shown by the students.

"But not as disciplined as they were," Li replied.

"You mean a couple of weeks ago when there were a million people out here?" I asked her.

"Yeah," she answered.

"You know there are a lot of people here tonight who are not students, who are the working people of Beijing, no?"

"Yes, and no turmoil," Li said proudly, stressing the last word as if she wanted Li Peng to be listening.

"Do you think now that this kind of demonstration will continue for a while longer? There has been talk of ending it soon."

Li replied: "Most of the students here now are from other cities. They come and go."

"Some are from Beijing universities," I persisted. "I saw the banners coming in here."

"Yes," she said, "but much less than before. Many are going out to other areas to tell the people what's going on here. And tonight, we will have more people here. The government has stopped and not allowed people to come here, but still we have support."

Indeed they did. As we walked around the square, my eyes were again drawn to the video cameras covered up by the students to prevent identification of the demonstrators. In the background, the bicycle bells rang incessantly.

The sheer size of the mobilization made me recall a phone conversation that morning with a friend back in San Francisco, who told me that large pro-democracy demonstrations were also taking place in Shanghai. I asked Li if she'd heard about them.

"No, I haven't," she replied, "but it makes me very happy. And I am not surprised. All Chinese people want democracy."

You could sense a charged atmosphere throughout Tiananmen Square as word spread about the pending arrival of the Goddess of Democracy and Freedom, the star of the Arts and Crafts Festival. The Goddess was rumored to be a 30-foot high plaster of paris statue, constructed by students from Beijing's Central, Fine Arts and Music Colleges. Li told me she had heard that the authorities had attempted to block the arrival of the statue miles from the square, but there was no word as to their success. I felt a little deflated upon hearing this, but when I scanned the crowd in Tiananmen I knew the statue would make it there.

Suddenly, I realized that the Anglo man I was staring at in the crowd was none other than Fred, the travel agent from Seattle. It turned out that my initial skepticism concerning his story about opening a travel bureau in Beijing was justified--Fred was actually a cameraman for ABC News.

Pandemonium reigned near a large square area that had been cordoned off by the students for the scaffolding tower they were building for the Goddess of Democracy and Freedom. There was all sorts of commotion, confusion, pushing and shoving going on as everyone jockeyed for the best position to view the arrival of the statue. But the highly disciplined marshals were doing an outstanding job managing to keep matters under control.

"What 's coming?" someone shouted in English.

"The statue's coming."

Suddenly, majestic-sounding trumpets blared from Tiananmen's loudspeakers, adding to the tremendous excitement in the air. The horns were a prelude to the playing of the Internationale, signaling the looming arrival of the Goddess of Democracy and Freedom. I did my best to situate myself as close to the scaffolding tower as possible, but so were many hundreds of others. Monitors constantly exhorted us to back away from the tower.

The Internationale brought goose bumps to my skin and chills down my spine, as it did when I heard it coming from the square's loudspeakers the moment I'd first entered Tiananmen Square. The stirring theme of the international communist anthem never fails to evoke that reaction in me, whether I'm at a Socialist Workers Party convention in Oberlin, Ohio, or just watching Warren Beatty's Reds. But there was something different about it this evening in the square; it was hard to tell if the students' motivation was genuinely patriotic, an emotional appeal to the senior leadership of the Chinese Communist Party to back up the Marxist rhetoric with genuine socialist policies, or if the students were mocking the party elders, attempting to bring legitimacy to the mass demonstrations and outflanking the Party in choosing the Internationale as the musical backdrop for the Tiananmen protests. I suspected it was a little of both.

A large yellow bunting was draped around the top of a pickup truck not far from the tower. Li said the word was circulating that the students had eluded the authorities' attempt to intercept the statue and were on their way to Tiananmen Square.

Students then began chanting emotionally, "Torsha! Torsha! Torsha!" [Sit down!] A friendly student walked up to me and struck up a conversation.

"I've been here six years. I graduated from Normal University in July 1983. My name is Lijie."

I asked Lijie about the hunger strike Professor Bai had talked about.

"It's not real news to us. I don't think so," he replied.

"What do you know about the statue?" I asked him.

"It looks like what's in the United States. It's about 30 meters high. It is made of plaster."

"How long did it take to build it?"

"Five days," Lijie answered. "Thirteen students made it; it took them five days. They were from the Beijing Central Arts Institute."

As he spoke, the bright lights from NBC and ABC live cameras illuminated the nearby crowd of students, bringing shouts, smiles and the V for Victory sign from the demonstrators.

"We will stay here until the Congress," continued Lijie.

"You mean the National People's Congress, which meets June 20th?" I inquired.

"Yah, yah, yah," replied Lijie. "Democracy in China is impossible at the present time."

"You mean with this current leadership?" I asked.

"Yes, because Deng is a very powerful man," said Lijie seriously.

Fred, the ABC journalist, asked Lijie, "What does power mean to you?"

"He has the army," responded Lijie immediately, with a sense of finality.

Suddenly a loud roar went up from the crowd. I turned to see three bicycle carts slowly making their way through the people assembled in the middle of the square. Each cart carried a third of what would become the Goddess of Democracy and Freedom. The crowd yelled and applauded wildly over the arrival of the much-anticipated artistic creation of the students. The lights from the television cameras were still illuminating the radiance and hope in the faces of the students as they waved the V sign for the world audience. Many wore shirts with the Goddess and the word "Democracy" on them; others sported buttons possessing an amusing touch of authenticity--the word "Victor" (instead of Victory) over the V sign and reading "Beijing 1989."

"Torsha! Torsha!" cried the hard-pressed marshals, locking arms and straining to keep back the delirious mass of demonstrators. The crowd surges right in front of me and to my right, in front of the first cart carrying the top portion of the Goddess's torso. Behind me, the students clapped and cheered again when bathed in the white lights of the news cameras. The crowd was joyous, exuberant, spirited and determined. The people seemed conscious of a great victory over the authorities. The government had been outwitted again; the statue had arrived.

Film crews frantically jockeyed for position as the statue approached the tower. I noticed an intense concentration of red and yellow flags surrounding the future home of the Goddess. Then a burst of applause erupted behind me as the trio of tricycle carts were being pulled right past me. As a man shouted excitedly over a loudspeaker, a group of students began clearing out the area for the construction of the Goddess. Then another man's voice was coming out of a different speaker; his tone was more intense. He was followed by a young woman speaking in English: "Will all the journalists please sit down. Tanks a lot."

Students began chanting at the people in the back to sit down.

"Torsha! Torsha!"

The woman's voice again came over the loudspeaker.

"To all journalists. Please sit down. Tanks a lot. Will you please do not take photos now."

By now, a mass of students were furiously working on the scaffolding tower in preparation for the Goddess of Democracy and Freedom. A friendly Chinese student began talking to me. I asked him if he went to school in Beijing.

"In Beijing, yes," he replied.

"And you've been coming to all the student protests for the last month?"

"Almost every time. How long are you in Beijing?" he asked.

"I just came Saturday. I was here for Sunday's demonstration."

"Demonstration, yes," repeats the student.

"This is incredible, tremendous."

"Yes, tremendous demonstration. Fantastic. On Sunday I went to my friend's wedding, so I missed that demonstration. I think many students are too tired. They are weary; not so many students go to demonstration as we expected."

"You mean at Sunday's demonstration?" I asked him.

"Yes, I missed Sunday's demonstration, I had to go to wedding."

"But there are a lot of students here tonight," I tell him.

"Many students and citizens, yes," the student agrees.

"I notice the government has been trying to divide the students from the people," I said to him.

"Divide, yes. It's a trick."

"The people still support the students' demand for democracy, right?"

"Yes, yes," he answered with enthusiasm. "The government has the most efficient press tools so they can convince the common people. Very efficient. But they cannot cheat us. The government cannot cheat us."

"Are the students still demanding the resignations of Li Peng and Deng Xiaoping?" I asked.

"Yes," he answered without hesitation. "Li Peng and Deng Xiaoping must resign. They have lost credibility and trust from the people. We have two goals: 1) Withdraw the troops from the outskirts of the city; and 2) Li Peng resign."

"And even Deng?" I inquired.

"Also Deng Xiaoping, but that is more difficult."

"Do you think Deng enjoys more support from the workers than does Li Peng? Or is it that he is too powerful?"

"Yes, he's too powerful. But he has lost support from the people in our country. It's a complex problem. For our students, we believe that a great part don't believe communism. But we cannot oppose communism in our Party. Some Party leaders are good, but some are bad."

As we spoke, students were removing some of the flags from the scaffolding tower, leaving on the Chinese flag at the top.

"What is this other flag down here?" I inquired of my friend.

"That is the Central and Fine Arts College," he replied.

"What about the flag on the other side?" I then asked him.

"Central Music College. They worked together. Just about eight arts colleges, including music and sculpture, all worked together to build the Goddess."

"Torsha! Torsha!" chanted the square marshals. The young woman was again exhorting the journalists to refrain from taking pictures while the students were constructing the Goddess. The sing-song characteristic of her voice was having an almost hypnotic effect on me, particularly when she would follow each plea with "Tanks a lot."

As the Goddess of Democracy and Freedom was being assembled into one piece at her new home in Tiananmen Square, her long, arduous journey through the streets of Beijing on three tricycle carts now over, it was clear that the 30-foot tall statue would have an equally hypnotic effect on Beijing. She really did resemble the Statue of Liberty, except that Tiananmen's Goddess held the freedom torch with both hands. My new friend informed me that the students drew on several diverse influences in building the Goddess--most prominently New York-s Statue of Liberty, but also a figure from China's mythological history.

A searing pride filled the square as the students worked furiously to complete the Goddess. The people of Beijing were proud of themselves, proud of the students, especially the art students who build the statue, and most of all, proud of the Goddess herself. During the several hours it took to finish the job, an awed silence fell over the square. Nearly everyone was sitting down and gazing up at the Goddess in wonder. The final act of defiance was unfolding in front of their eyes. There would be no going back now. The Goddess ruled Tiananmen, facing down Chairman Mao's brooding face across the Avenue of Eternal Peace.

Sometime past two in the morning, the Goddess of Democracy and Freedom was in one piece, in all her glory, and the jubilant crowd cheered in approval. The students left the red and yellow bunting wrapped around her head, saving the unveiling for the official ceremony planned for noon the next day.

Shortly thereafter I left Tiananmen, well before the great majority of demonstrators could pull themselves away from the star of the arts and crafts festival. I began walking down Changan, still crowded with pedestrians and bicyclists, families, and transient types; still emanating a festive atmosphere. Beijing was a city that never slept during these last days of May 1989. Before long, an old man pedaling a motorized cart was gesturing to give me a lift home. After some haggling, I gave him 10 yuan for the ride back to the Minzu.

Beijing's citizens made me feel like some kind of celebrity sitting in the back of that taxi-cart; people were smiling, waving, flashing the V for Victory sign, beaming when I returned it, and staring at me with that friendly curiosity. They were looking at me not so much as a stranger than as a participant and fellow demonstrator for democracy. Though thousands of miles from New York or San Francisco, I felt very much at home.

We passed the Communist Party headquarters at Zhonghanhai. Many hundreds of demonstrators were camping out in front of Zhonghanhai, still staring down the eight soldiers solemnly guarding the entrance to the compound, while hundreds more onlookers slowed down or stopped to check out the scene. Not a word was spoken by the soldiers, and there did not appear to be a hint of any overt animosity between the demonstrators and the soldiers; only a strange, uneasy silence existed between them. Occasionally, an agitator with a bullhorn would lead the crowd in a militant-sounding chant. The banners reading "Serve the People" still hung from the mouths of the two lion statues in front of the compound.

It was a long time before I drifted off to sleep. So much had occurred since the fascinating dinner and cab ride to Tiananmen with Professor Bai. Though I'd spent only two hours with him, I felt that he was one of the most extraordinary individuals I'd ever met. I was bowled over by his fervor, energy and infectious optimism; he had thrown himself into the pro-democracy movement and was obviously entrenched in the Zhao wing of the Communist Party.

It wasn't hard to understand Bai's ebullience, for there hadn't been too many high moments for intellectuals in recent Chinese history. But now, in the midst of the Beijing Spring, they were in the leadership of a mass movement for democracy that was spreading across China, had put Deng Xiaoping on the defensive, and the whole world was watching. What's more, their campaign possessed legitimacy, as their cause had found support in Zhao's reformist faction of the Party. Zhao was a party leader, and the pro-democracy movement was a patriotic one.

Bai had been excited over reports that the Party document condemning Zhao had been withdrawn; he was still looking for signs that Zhao's fortunes were on the rise. At least outwardly, Bai was confident that the Deng/Li Peng leadership could be ousted by Zhao's moderate faction. But Zhao himself had told the students in Tiananmen Square ten days earlier that it was too late. Zhao was nowhere to be heard, and the only news from the government was Li Peng's warnings to end the Tiananmen demonstrations.

I thought of the exuberant pride in Bai's voice when he told me how the students were organizing teams of pro-democracy agitators to travel around the country and build the movement. The plan itself showed that at least some of the student leaders were grappling with the political challenges facing them, challenges which were generated by the success of the mass movement in Beijing. They were beginning to look beyond the parameters of Tiananmen Square, realizing that the success of the campaign depended on the capacity of the pro-democracy forces to broaden the fight into a national one.

There were signs that they were succeeding: the reports of the pro-democracy mobilizations breaking out in Chengdu, Xian, Canton, Shanghai, and other cities. China was a country alive with politics and motion. Beijing students were traveling around China agitating for democracy. Students from provinces all over the country were trekking to Beijing to keep up the occupation of the square.

But there was also a very different kind of motion, one not nearly as visible as the Tiananmen protests, occurring in China's capital and political center--the counterrevolutionary motion of the black limousines whisking Deng, Li Peng, Yang Shangkun and others in and out of Zhonghanhai, consolidating their power and marshalling their forces in preparation for the crackdown that drew closer.

I thought again of Professor Bai; I pictured him valiantly coming to the aid of his injured students after they were attacked by the police, and I understood why it looked like Bai was parting the Red Sea as we walked across the square. He had gained a great deal of respect from the students, and was now a leading activist in the movement. I only wished that Bai had been able to stick around for the arrival of the Goddess. But he made it clear that his wife was worried sick about his deep involvement in Tiananmen, and she wanted him home that night. Some things are the same the world over.

Most importantly, Professor Bai had provided a major breakthrough concerning the elusive Beijing Autonomous Workers Federation. The reports that three BAWF activists were arrested by the government showed that the Chinese workers were becoming more integrally involved in the pro-democracy campaign. The bad news was that Deng and Li Peng were observing this development as well, and they were using this to bolster their hard-line position.

"What's coming? The statue's coming."

**Chapter 4: Tuesday, May 30th**

Beijing is rife with talk of Tiananmen Square's newest resident--the Goddess of Democracy and Freedom. The capital is electrified over the students' latest initiative-- a bold, imaginative stroke of public relations and symbolism. They had sensed the movement was beginning to lose momentum. It needed a spark, a galvanizing force to sustain the fervor of the demonstrations and keep them going until the June 20th National Party Congress meeting. The Goddess provided that spark, and had reignite Beijing's passion.

The students announced that the Goddess would be officially unveiled at a ceremony in the square to take place at noon. The wide avenues like Changan and the side streets running off them were filled with citizens gathered in groups of varying sizes. Some were reading proclamations posted on city walls; others were engaging in spirited discussions, much of them no doubt concerning the Goddess.

I made it to Tiananmen Square shortly before 11 a.m. There she was, defiantly challenging Chairman Mao, her face still covered with the red and yellow bunting. She was surrounded by a huge, adoring crowd of at least 100,000, most of them sitting down or squatting, in relative silence, looking up at the 30-foot statue. As noon approached, the excitement mounted as television cameras m maneuvered for position in front of the Goddess.

Then, at precisely 12 noon, the students removed the bunting from the Goddess's face. An emotional roar went up from the audience, and multi-colored balloons were released into the air. A few minutes later, a young woman began reading a proclamation to the assembly as a disciplined silence fell over the crowd. She sounded much like the same woman who the previous night had been patiently exhorting the journalists to sit down and cease taking photos while the Goddess was being erected. A friendly student sitting next to me translated her remarks.

"This torch of democracy represents our hope. It is a symbol of our ideals of students in the square and throughout China. It signals a great awakening, a new era of democracy. The spirit of democracy is deeply rooted in China. We will not tolerate any sabotage of this symbol. The day will come when we have democracy. Long live freedom! Long live the people!"

As the people enthusiastically cheered her remarks, I was again struck by the Woodstock-like atmosphere in Tiananmen Square. Though the student leader had expressed the assembly's militant desire for democratic rights, there was no trace of counterrevolutionary rebellion anywhere. The protesters were very much conducting themselves in a patriotic framework.

While walking back to the Minzu, it was clear that the construction of the Goddess represented a brilliant tactical counter on the students' part to the government's recent moves to defuse the pro-democracy campaign. This city was jumping with politics; street corners and intersections were mobbed with a politicized populace. The people were taking advantage of the political space won by the mass movement with a vengeance. Everywhere I was greeted with winks, smiles, and V signs from a people buoyed from the latest success of the struggle.

Just when it had seemed that the wind was being let out of the sails of the demonstrators, the Goddess of Democracy and Freedom had galvanized public opinion and relit the fervor of the pro-democracy movement. While Beijing?'s working people were genuinely proud of the students for building the Goddess, and news of the statue was on everyone's lips, the government chose to ignore her. The state TV news hardly mentioned the hundreds of thousands of citizens in Tiananmen Square; instead, viewers heard the anchor persons read letter after letter from citizens all over China expressing support for martial law and urging the students to quit the square and return home.

But the government's plea fell on deaf ears. All signs pointed to a large turnout in Tiananmen that evening to celebrate the arrival of the Goddess of Democracy and Freedom.

Shortly after six I began walking up the Avenue of Eternal Peace toward the square, and immediately it was apparent that this was no ordinary Beijing rush hour. Throngs of people of all ages on bicycles and foot were making their way toward Tiananmen. The scene at Zhonghanhai was even more striking than usual; more than 1,000 demonstrators were camped outside the Party's compound, chanting and staring down the eight soldiers sitting yoga-like guarding the building. It looked like all of Beijing was headed for the square to see the Goddess and celebrate the latest initiative by the students.

A block before the entrance, a group of street people, lumpen types, scavenged through the abandoned garbage strewn over campsites on the sidewalks near Tiananmen. As I approached the square I didn't hear the usual sound of the government spokesperson's voice coming from the speakers by Mao's portrait. Instead, the Beijing air was filled with the sounds of bicycle bells and children's laughter.

A large crowd greeted the Goddess on her first full night in Tiananmen Square. There she stood, surrounded by all kinds of flags--the flag from the arts and crafts school, the Chinese flag, flags from hundreds of other colleges and universities. Many people were checking the Goddess out with intense curiosity. The students guarding the Goddess did so with militant discipline. The people appeared touched and genuinely proud of the students for building her. A young man walked up to me and smiled.

"Are you a journalist?" he asked.

"Yes, I am, from the United States," I replied. "How do you feel about the Statue of Freedom that the students made and brought here last night?"

"We like it very much. Because we are here, our government will break it. Today they said . . . Government will break it. If this building was broken, we would build another bigger one, a stronger one."

I said to him, "So you're saying the students feel the statue belongs to them, to the people, and if the government tried to take it away, you would just build another one?"

"Yah."

"And how do you think the government would respond?" I asked. "They don't like it, right?"

"They don't like it. Because they are afraid of democracy and freedom. But this, Chinese freedom, very like New York's . . ."

"Statue of Liberty," I said, completing his sentence.

"Yah, yah, yah."

"It's a symbol of freedom to win," I said to him.

"Yah, yah, yah. Not only freedom, it means democracy and freedom," he explained.

"Can you tell me what the mood of the students is now? Is there a fear of the government sending the army, cracking down and ending the demonstrations? Or is there a confidence that you've won a victory, and that the government will not crack down?"

"You want to know what can we do here?" he asked me.

"Well, that too, I want to . . ."

"If the army comes, we will do what?" he offered.

"Yeah, yeah."

He told me: "Every student likes peace. We don't like violence. So if it appears People's Liberation Army will come in, we don't hit them. But maybe they will hit us. We are not sure. Maybe they will move everybody on the truck or bus, and go back to college or university."

I asked him, "Do the students feel that there's a real danger that Deng and Li will decide to send the army and end the protests?"

"Yeah, it's a danger. Very danger. But we are not sure, tonight, tomorrow, what day. But we are sure that some day . . ."

I noticed a growing crowd of curious onlookers surrounding us during the conversation. The sight of any Westerner talking to a Chinese demonstrator in Tiananmen Square these days was enough to attract attention, because the Chinese had a driving thirst for information and that kind of exchange. Unfortunately, as I again noticed the dozens of cameras attached to poles that had been covered by the students to prevent spying, I knew that some of this attention could very well include undercover agents. We decided to end our talk and move on.

I stood standing in the midst of a crowd directly in front of and to the side of the Goddess, mesmerized by the people's curiosity. The irony presented by the sight of the Goddess of Democracy and Freedom facing Mao was not lost on the Tiananmen demonstrators.

Suddenly Big Brother returned; the government spokesperson resumed his broadcast from the Forbidden City's entrance. The War of the Loudspeakers was back. For several minutes I stood there, entranced by the flags, banners, balloons, bicycle bells, mass of protesters, and most of all, by the Goddess herself.

A friendly, portly man in his late 30s walked up to me and asked what I thought of the situation.

"It seems that in the last few days the government keeps trying to make its own chess moves to end the protest and diffuse the situation. I sensed a mood that perhaps it would end, a feeling of resignation, maybe thinking they should go back home and figure out new ways to move the democracy movement forward, but that the demonstrations in Tiananmen must end."

"Yes, yes," my new friend agreed.

I continued: "The government was consolidating its power, making its move against Zhao, while Deng and Li consolidated their power. I watched a little of the China newscast; I noticed what they were doing in the coverage, reading letters, saying workers all over China were writing letters, asking the students to leave. They were putting on the pressure, but they were doing it very smoothly. On the one hand they were saying . . . they were conscious, very conscious of the support the students have among the people, so they were careful not to condemn all the students. They were careful to praise the students for the patriotism and good intentions, but they chose to target the leaders, the so-called small group of instigators."

"Yes, that's right," he interjected.

"It seems they were trying to divide the students from the rest of the population, to isolate them and pressure the workers. I understand there were reports that in the factories the managers were telling workers not to join the students. You might hurt your chances for your job or bonus. And the students, they were quiet for a few days; there were only 10,000 or so in the square. Well, Sunday was a big demonstration. I saw that. Very large. And then all of a sudden they came back with this. And it was a brilliant move, because if the government thought the movement was dying or ending, that's over. I don't think you can say that now. Now they have another problem. Now they have something that's bringing more people to the square. It's a catalyst, a spark. There are many people here tonight, 150,000 at least?"

Well, he did ask me what I thought of the situation. Ecstatic over meeting someone who spoke and understood English so well, I wanted him to know I knew much about his country's politics. When I told him I was a journalist from San Francisco, his face brightened. From the twinkle in his eye and his friendly demeanor, I knew instantly he had taken to me, and a warm rapport began growing between us. He introduced himself as Wang. He said he worked for the Institute of History at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

Already a small crowd of spectators were huddling around us. Wang picked up again with the size of the assembly that evening.

"Yes, 150,000 people are here. There are people coming in the next few days. The people will come down more."

"They're talking about the statue all over the city, right?" I asked him.

"Yes, because every people think the stone is a freedom, is a symbol, who will live in the ordinary people's hearts forever, you see. Because you know in China, you have not a lot of freedom and also a lot of problems nowadays, especially during the reforms, a lot of problems. So the people think the government should modify their mistakes, you see. The ordinary people want government to correct some mistakes. . . So the ordinary people will know what happens in the reforms. Because the reform policy is hurting every ordinary people concerning the country's future. That's why every people should agree to concern about what is going on in the leading group. It's no good for them to . . ."

His voice drifted for a moment, and his eyes gazed at the Goddess and her admirers. Then Wang refocused and continued.

"They seem to forget about the people. I don't know why. That's why so many people come to Tiananmen Square to support the hunger struggle of our students. It is very hard to believe the government adopted these measures to move the military outside Beijing, to surround Beijing, the issuance of martial law. It's no good, I don't think it?s good we talk in public. That's why I worry about this."

"Do you think there's a danger still that the government, that Li Peng and Deng, will decide to send the army to break up the demonstrations?" I asked Wang.

He replied: "I don't think they will break up the demonstrations; they use the troops to use . . . they are afraid to use the power; because I think there must be different opinions within the leading group and . . . also very strong. That's why they have to bring army. . . the people, students, sitting here are very powerful. It?s not easy to bring the troops in. That's why the students bring the statue here; it's a symbol of the peace and freedom."

"It sounds like you're proud of them."

"Yes. If I were young I would join them. I've studied abroad, in Britain. I know in the Western countries people have opportunity to give their own opinion, even on television. But in China you can't. So, this is no good for the country's future. What do you think about that?"

"I agree with you," I answered. "I think that people all over the world are fighting for democracy, freedom, for the right to control their lives, for the right to have the information we need in order to run our societies. I'm an American socialist. I think that the American working class, and the working farmers, some day will make a socialist revolution. But I think that the question of democracy is at the center of it; you cannot have socialism without democracy."

"Yeah, that's right," Wang agreed.

"It cannot work, by the very definition of it," I continued. "You know, what Marx meant that the working people should not only collectively own the means of production but run it, and in order to do that, you need democracy. The working class must have information, they must have access in order to make the decisions. . "

"They must know what's going on," added Wang.

"Exactly. You can't have a bureaucracy at the top, because as you say they'll get away from the people."

"Yes," Wang said.

"They'll have their own distinct interests," I elaborated.

"Yes," repeated Wang. "They are, they go in the wrong direction I think. At this moment, the government is so far away from the ordinary people. It causes a few problems."

"I understand the use of the Statue of Liberty for the symbolism of freedom and democracy, but as an American I must tell you that we too in the United States have a problem, as you do here, there being a big contradiction, a large gap between the rhetoric of what is said on paper, in the Constitution, etc., and the reality."

"Yes. Reality is very important," echoed Wang.

"While it?s true that we have, on the surface anyway, we have more democratic rights and freedoms; I, speaking as a socialist, I have a formal right to write letters to the newspaper, and maybe go on TV and say in a one minute editorial, 'Vote for my party,' but in practice, we have a dictatorship in the United States, of the capitalist monopoly. Most working people don't have access to the media; most of the media is owned by large corporation, and they influence what people know and say. I'll tell you something else. The United States government and the media which is covering events in China, they are also distorting what is going on here, in terms of how they're explaining it to the American people."

"How is that?" inquired Wang with interest.

"They paint it as the Chinese people trying to overthrow communism, that you are totally rejecting it, and they imply that the people are embracing capitalism, the way our country is run. And I don't get that feeling. I sense that the people of China want democracy, they want to make the system work better, they even want radical reforms, but not . . ."

"You are absolutely right," interrupted Wang.

"Not to go back to capitalism," I finished. I don't get that feeling from talking to people here."

"100 percent positive," said Wang excitedly, obviously pleased that an American understood his country's situation so well. "You are quite right."

"But it's a very complicated thing,? I went on, smiling to myself as I realized I was sounding like Mr. Xing, the TV Ministry bureaucrat. "On the surface, it looks like there's a foundation for the Western press and governments to do what I just told you, to distort things for their own purposes. They say, 'Look at the people of China, they want our freedoms too?' And what I say to you is that the American people and the Chinese people, we both have a problem, in terms of the gap between the rhetoric and reality. I think people all over the world, you know, we have to . . . there's an international crisis going on, and sooner or later we're going to have to look to each other as part of an international working class, to try and figure out how to make the world a better place. That's what we're all trying to accomplish. The world is becoming a smaller place . . ."

"Yes, you are quite right," agreed Wang.

"Look at the composition of the working class in the US, or Britain. You said you were in Britain, you saw it, or France. We have more and more immigration, more changes in the composition of the working class in the United States, in France, in England. . . We're getting quite a crowd here," I said, noticing the curious audience our conversation had been attracting. Most of them probably didn't understand what we were saying, but you could tell from their expressions they knew an intense discussion was taking place.

"That's no problem," said Wang confidently.

"It's no problem?" I asked with surprise, recalling Wang's earlier concern over discussing sensitive topics with undercover agents lurking about. But since I was enjoying our talk so much, I decided to trust Wang's judgment, and I continued.

"What does it mean to say that I'm an American now, when there are so many Latinos there, so many Asians, Chinese, Filipinos, so many people from Central and South American countries; in France you have many people of color from Africa and the Middle East emigrating to France; Britain too. Why? Because they way that the capitalist system is working internationally, there are no jobs for workers in their own countries, which forces them to go somewhere to work and send money back to their families. I don?t know how much in formation you get here, but in the United States now there is much racism and chauvinism being generated, to pit everyone against each other. That's the message of the capitalists. What we have to do is counter that and build solidarity among workers of all nationalities. We're all trying to figure out how to make this a better world."

"That's right," Wang said emphatically.

"What's going on here, as an American I can tell you that I look at it not strictly as a problem for China that takes place in the clouds and not in the same world as the Cubans and Americans and Russians and Palestinians. Everybody is fighting, everybody is struggling for justice, for self-determination, for democracy. And your fight right now is at the center of it; your fight is inspiring people all around the world. Your fight for democracy, your fight for freedom. But I tell you that it is part of a world struggle; the international economic order is in trouble, and we face another world depression; there will be big battles coming from that. We're all groping, trying to find a common road. And my personal opinion as a Marxist is that we all will meet on that road as Marxists. But it's gotta be democratic."

"Yes, yes," Wang agreed again.

"I don't think that Gorbachev, or Breszhnev, or Deng Xiaoping, or Li Peng, are really Marxists at all. Do you know who I think is? If you were to ask me, well then, who do you think is, what country, what socialist country is at least on the road, and has made the most progress, I would answer "Revolutionary Cuba" I was talking to one of the students from Inner Mongolia, one of the students leaders at Sunday 's demonstration. We had a very good discussion, a very good exchange of ideas; and I asked him what he knew about Cuba. And he said not much. I asked him, do the people of China have the right to recall members of the Communist Party if they're not doing a good job and the people want to vote them out? He said, "No, that's what we want, that's one of the things that we, that the whole movement for democracy, is about." I said, "Do you know that they have that right in Cuba? They have the right to recall, they have elections. If somebody is not doing well, and the people do not like the job he or she is doing, out they go and so someone else replaces them. We should pose the question to Comrades Deng and Li Peng, who call themselves Marxist-Leninists."

"Yes," said Wang.

"We should ask if they're aware that in the early days of the Russian Bolshevik Party, when Lenin was the leader, they had the right of recall. It was part of the Bolshevik program. The Cubans have it, and the Chinese should also. I've gone on for a while now, let me hear what you think."

Wang replied: "That is right, you can see from the student demonstrations here. And I think from the view of the ordinary people, we have correct choice. For the ordinary people we want prosperity and a bright future for our country. That's very important. We want peace, we don't want backward. You see, China is very backward, compared with some other developed countries. China is still developing country now. Every Chinese people I think is struggling for country to reach modernization, which is very important to us, to catch up with the other developed countries. So the student movement here just wants freedom."

I nodded in agreement. "You know, it's what we said earlier, that during the past week, when the government's been trying to make its moves to end the protests, to diffuse the situation. We said the government has been conscious of the support it knows the students have from the workers, so they're careful to characterize the students as patriotic. Because what you just said, about modernization, that's what the leaders say that they desire for China. That was the basis for Deng's reforms to modernize China. What were the four principles? Agriculture, industry, science, military, I guess."

"And technology," Wang added.

"Right, technology. So they say, yes, we have to modernize, but we also need stability and order; we have to end the turmoil. But you say, yes, we need order, but we need democracy. So there's a standoff, right? It's incredible. There is martial law. But where is the martial law? Yes, there's martial law on paper, but in practice, I don't see it. If there was martial law, we would not be able to talk like this, would we?"

Wang said: "Yes, and that's why I was asking if you understand any Chinese."

"No, no," I replied laughing. "I don't except 'thank you' and 'hello,' that's all. I wish I did."

Wang: "When we have a conversation here and there's a speaker over there, they announce some government announcements, or some display for the people standing in the square. They say something to the students. So that's different. You see, there is still a lot of people here. When we come here, a lot of people surround us. This gives you some evidence, you will compare what we said and what really happened here. So that means the ordinary people are very intelligent. They are very kind people. What we want is just to realize modernization. That is the correct way for us to catch up with the developed countries, the United States. You know, Chinese people are very intelligent people. We are not lazy. You see, we have 5000 years of culture and history. During or history, there were lots of intelligent people. We have lot of scientists in the history of China. We made great contributions for the human beings."

"Absolutely," I agreed.

Wang continued. "Yeah. That's why I said, our race, we have hope. We should have bright future, but what we can do is through peace, the peace way to solve the problem, that's what students do here in the square."

"So what do you think will happen now? I mean, the army is still around the city, and there seems to be no real talking even about a dialogue, about negotiations now. It seems both sides do not want to talk to each other now. I know the government has offered to evacuate the students if they would end the protests. They're trying to be conciliatory, saying there will be no punishment towards most of the people except these leaders they keep talking about. But I talked to some of the students, and they aren't really seriously talking about negotiations with the government because there seems to be no trust of the government now and strong doubts that the government would serious talk with the students. The students have given up on good faith talks with the government. So what's going to happen?"

Wang answered: "There's no way for them now. You can see clearly. It will not happen."

"You mean negotiations will not happen?"

"It will not happen. I mean not directly. Maybe indirectly. Directly, it's impossible," Wang said with an air of resignation.

Me: "Because I read something in the paper, I believe it was a quote from one of the Party leaders, Yang Shangkun. What he said was alarming. He said for the Party, the government, to back down now would be disastrous for China. It would mean the fall of socialism and the restoration of capitalism. Who the hell is talking about the restoration of capitalism?"

At that point, a young woman who had been one of the onlookers joined the discussion.

"Do you see all this as very different from the United States?" she inquired. "If some people have different opinions, they will say, 'You want to overthrow the government. You will be punished. You are dismissed from your college.' Different country. Different from the United States. And our government said, 'We will have a dialogue with the US.' But they didn't trust the students. They didn't trust the people. They said the students with different opinions would overthrow our country, our communist country. But I think in the United States if you have different opinions, you will elect a new president."

I turned to the woman and said: "Well, as I was saying to this gentleman before, we in the United States have a different set of problems with our government. We have problems, believe me."

"Yeah, sure," she said understandably.

"Because with us, we're finding out that it really doesn't make much difference between the Democrats and the Republicans, between Bush and Dukakis, Carter, or Reagan. It's almost as if we have one party, too."

"Yeah," she said again.

"You have one party, the Communist Party. On the surface we have two parties."

"Sure. The Democratic and Republicans," she stated knowingly.

"But both those parties really are the same."

"Yeah," she said. "But I think different parties have the same opinion, only one party, if this party is wrong."

"But it's possible," I continued, "even with a communist party, to be democratic. That's what I think this w hole movement for democracy is about. You're fighting to make radical reforms, to make this system more democratic and responsive to the people. But I would say to you that right now in the world there is a Communist Party that is democratic, or more democratic than the others, and that is in Cuba."

"Yeah, yeah, in Cuba," the woman affirmed.

"Because in Cuba, they have the right to recall someone, if the people don't like the job that person is doing."

"Sure, sure," said the woman.

"They have the right to vote him out and put in someone else they feel would be better. The Communist Party in Cuba is more responsive to the people, and the working people feel that the government is their government. The leader, Fidel Castro, he and the leadership consciously fight bureaucratism and privilege."

"Yeah, yeah," she said again.

"Consciously try and draw the people into running the country to fight corruption, which is a problem there, as in any country, especially a poor country. So it is possible to have a communist party that is better. And I think that's the hope of all of you people here, to make reforms, to make the Communist Party more democratic. It is possible. You see, I'm an American socialist."

"Really?" the woman asked incredulously, her eyes widening.

"Yes, but I support you. I support the student demonstrators. I'd be in trouble with Deng and Li Peng too."

This statement brought hearty laughter from those onlookers who understood what I'd said. I continued. "They wouldn't like my views. Even though I'm a Marxist, they have a different, uh, they went to a different school of communism."

"Those in the government are very old," said the woman. "You see in the reports, Communist Party leader Deng Xiaoping said, 'Our country is not easy to get, because you see our country is liberated in 1949. The country is worsened.' I cannot explain myself clearly."

"Go ahead. That's all right," I assured her.

"We can get a new government to rule. Because the country has a lot of disturbances, turmoil. We cannot have a new leader. Deng is always the top leader. Until his death. This is something the young people cannot understand. Since 1978, we have opened policies to the world. We have sent students to other colleges, and they have seen a lot of knowledge from the Western countries. So they know. They do not have a top leader like a Mao. Nobody can always be correct."

"Well, you know, you say that Deng said that you can't overthrow the government. But the students aren't even talking about overthrowing the government. You wanted to have talks to make reforms."

"Yeah, sure," she replied. "We always want reform, not overthrow it."

"You don't want to overthrow socialism in China. That's not the demand of the students."

"Nobody dare to say overthrow socialism," said the young woman. "Otherwise the problem . . .be a prisoner. That is why nobody, you see, you are socialist. I can't understand. The communists, it's no good. Capitalists, I don't know. You see, a lot of capitalist countries, West Germany, America, they have conquered very quickly. They have conquered a lot of places, even countries are very poor. Like before the liberation. I don't what is the better way to develop our society, communism or like America. So we're anxious about it."

"Good discussion," I said to her smiling.

"I think a lot of college students think the same as me."

"I think you're right," I affirmed. The discussion came to a temporary halt as the people in the square listened intently to what sounded like an official government broadcast over the speakers.

After a few minutes, I resumed the conversation with another student who had been listening to my exchange with Wang and the woman.

"So you want the government when they're meeting to see the people here and you want to have an influence on them? There are reports in the press there may be in the next few days a change in the government, a purge, perhaps with Zhao Zhang out. Have you heard that?"

"Chinese press or foreign press?" he asked me.

"Foreign press," I replied.

"We don't want to put somebody down. We just want democracy."

"Oh, I know," I said quickly, realizing the source of his confusion. "My question was not if you want to see Zhao put down, but I'm asking if you have heard that report too? Do you expect it to happen?"

The group laughed and talked amongst themselves for a few minutes, then turned to me and asked, still giggling, "Hunter? Do you know about Hunter?"

It took me five minutes to figure out that they were sidestepping my sensitive question by hiding behind the TV show "Hunter," which is one of the most popular programs in China. Finally, a student stepped forward and said to me,

"We can't answer your question, so we asked you another question."

"Very clever," I opined, to the continued good-natured laughter of the crowd.

Then, turning serious, the student asked me what the American people were hearing about the pro-democracy movement in China.

"Part of the problem is that the American government, and the Western press, for their own reasons, are distorting the events here."

"They are saying something that is not really happening here?" he asked.

"They are distorting it, they're not telling the truth. Before I go any further on that, the American people support the students' campaign for democracy. No question. It has inspired the American people as it has inspired people all over the world. I don't know if you've heard, if you've gotten reports in the press, probably not, but there have been demonstrations in American cities--New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, by Asian-Americans, Chinese, and others, in support of the demonstrations here."

"We all want the reports to be real," said the student seriously.

"Let me explain my point about the American government, and how they're distorting the news. They are telling the American people that the Chinese people are anticommunist, that they're fighting communism. But what they mean by communism is important."

The student I had been conversing with then translated the comments of an other student standing next to him.

"He says we want to set up a new system, a new regime. An economic one. Not a system that is concerned with ideology."

"In what way change the economy?" I asked him. "To capitalism?"

"No, not capitalism," replied the student through the translator. "Just to make the government civilized. Can be civilized."

"Can be held accountable to the people," I offered.

"Can be directed by the people," said the student.

"So that the government is more responsive to the people," I added.

"The government should be responsive to the people," said the student.

"You see, that was my impression of what's going on here. That the students, and the workers who support the students, are not calling for the overturn of communism, as the American government is telling its people. But that what you desire are radical reforms to make the system better, more democratic."

"I haven't been interpreter before," said the young man, almost sheepishly.

"You're doing a very good job, very well," I replied reassuringly. "You might have a new career ahead of you now. You can go to the government and get an interpreting job maybe."

The students laughed at this suggestion. "I think I'm a translator but not interpreter," said the translator-student. With that, one of his friends said something to him. Smiling, he told me, "He says I should answer you that, I think the back door."

They broke out again in laughter. "The back door is very popular. In America?" the student inquired.

"Back door?" I queried, with a puzzled look on my face.

"I think it's maybe Shanghaied from China," said the student, trying his hand at stand-up comedy.

"Back door?" I repeated, not having the faintest idea what they were talking about.

?Yes, back door,? he explained patiently. "It means special position with the heads, a special place, position. You can get good jobs."

"Oh, oh, yeah. Oh, we have that in the United States too. The rich and the privileged go to the best schools and get the best jobs; if you're born into money you will have the best chance to succeed."

"I think one of the most difficult jobs in China is to translate quandao [back door] into English," said the student with a laugh.

"I'll take your word for it. You see, the freedoms we have in American, you must remember, we get a lot of propaganda too. We're taught that the source of freedoms and democracy in the world came from America and nowhere else. That's not true. The American Revolution was a democratic revolution, but it didn't start the ideas of democracy and freedom. The American revolutionists studied them from the revolutionaries in Europe. Every piece of freedom and democracy and rights that Americans have were not given to us by the government. They were fought for by the people. And the situation now in the United States is, on paper, we have the freedom to have these discussions. But in practice, if the people of the United States go too far in using their freedoms, the government will crack down and repress us to, with jailings, frameups, beatings and murder."

"Murder?" gasped several students.

"Oh yeah."

"How about FBI and CIA?" asked the translator-student.

"Yes. Spying on people like me."

This comment brought on another round of laughter from those in the crowd who understood me.

"I know a film, it's called Z?" asked the student.

"Z. Yes. That was about the events in Greece," I said, pleased with his familiarity with the movie.

"In the 1970s," he added proudly.

At this point, Wang, who had left the gathering for a few minutes, rejoined the discussion.

"I stayed in America for one year," remarked Wang. "At Indiana University."

"Where? Indiana University? The Hoosiers?" I said with a laugh.

"Hoosiers, yes. Basketball," he continued, picking up on my passion for basketball.

"Coach Bobby Knight," I said, again laughing.

"Bobby Knight. Do you like Bobby Knight?"

"No, I don't really like Bobby Knight," I replied, deciding not to explain the racist reputation surrounding the controversial, hot-tempered coach.

"The color is red," interjected another student. "Is it from the so-called redskin, I mean, the Indian people?" he asked.

"What's the redskin?" I queried, again somewhat confused.

"Uh, the color red. Some people call Indian people redskin."

"Oh, oh, yes," I managed to reply, realizing that the references to Indiana University caused the student to make a connection to Indians. "Yeah, they have a reddish-brown color. They're an oppressed national minority in the United States."

He asked, "Do a lot of white people look down on them?"

"Yes, there's a lot of racism in America," I answered, impressed with the student's perception. "The rulers in America, the capitalist rulers, [laughter] they very shrewdly use racism to divide Black, white, brown and yellow. They use racism to keep all the workers divided and fighting each other instead of uniting and fighting the capitalists."

Wang had heard enough. He touched my arm and asked me gently, "Excuse me, where do you come from?"

"I live in San Francisco. I was born near New York City."

"And what are you doing now, here?"

"I work for . . . Good bye," I said to one of the students who had been talking with me. "I work for a publishing company, as a copy editor. But I'm more of a, as you can probably perceive, a political scientist and activist."

"So this a big moment for you to understand what is happening in different countries, to assess the situation," remarked Wang.

"It's a fantastic experience. I don't think I'll ever be the same," I told him. "I want to relate to you a story, briefly, that is an example of what I said before about racism in the United States. We have a worse problem than China in some ways--unemployment. Many people are not working. As I said, the bosses, the corporations, use racism to pit workers against each other. Whites look down on Blacks, on the Asians, on the Latinos."

Wang spent several minutes translating these remarks to the intrigued crowd. Then I resumed.

"In Detroit, where they make the cars, in the early 1980s, there was very high unemployment."

"Yeah, I read books about the family Ford," said Wang.

"When there's high unemployment, as you know exists in the United States, there's a lot of racism against the Japanese, because Ford tells its workers that the Japanese are taking away their jobs. In 1982, what happened was some unemployed white auto workers killed a Chinese-American named Vincent Chin, killed him with a baseball bat."

"Yeah, yeah," concurred Wang with an air of familiarity.

"You know about that?" I asked Wang.

"Yeah, I know. They think he was Japanese."

"They thought he was Japanese," I corrected him mildly.

"Yeah, yeah. Thought."

"They thought he was Japanese, and the white workers, angry at the Japanese for stealing their jobs, killed him. What was even worse was the men who killed him did not get into any trouble; they basically got away with it. Never did any time in prison, no jail. They just walked away."

I could feel the anger rising in my voice. "It is an example of the racism in the United States, not only in the streets, but in the courts. No justice there. There was no question they killed him. So we have a lot of problems in the United States. Tell them that the democratic rights that were fought for and won by the American people are increasingly under attack by the government, by Reagan, by Bush, it doesn't matter."

One student began talking intensely with Wang for a few minutes. Wang turned to me and translated: "He said compared with what?s happening in the United States, now in China, the students and people ask a lot of questions to the government and ask for freedoms. What happened in America if the same?"

"Let me see if I understand this. You mean, when American students protest to the government?"

"No, no, not students. When the people ask something, you know, and want to correct what government does. What will happen in America?"

"The American political system is not democratic. That statue is all symbolism. On paper, yes. But in reality, the American system is not representative. In theory we have freedoms, as long as we don't use them. If you use them too much, the government will shoot their people in the streets and club them and jail them. There is repression in the United States; there are political prisoners. We do have the right to hold large, peaceful demonstrations to protest government policy. I don't mean to say by any means, in saying that our system is not democratic, that we're living under fascism now. That is not true. Although I must say, if hundreds of thousands of Americans occupied the area surrounding the Washington and Lincoln monuments and built a statue of Mao or Lenin, the authorities would not have permitted the demonstrations to continue as long as your have gone on."

"So what are the limitations in America?" Wang asked.

I replied: "The limitations depend on the given relationship of forces in any situation you're looking at. Sometimes, we can have large demonstrations like this, if we get permits with the authorities to hold the rally. But if you're a political activist, in a union, trying to organize a union, or if you're a socialist in the United States, you might be spied on, or beaten, or framed up, or killed. In our elections, we have two major parties, the Democrats and the Republicans. There are many other parties, smaller parties, some socialists, co communists, but in practice it is very difficult, the government makes it difficult, puts lots of restrictions on the rights of these smaller parties, radical parties, to get on the ballot in many states. When we have television debates before elections, they don't allow the smaller parties to participate in the debates with the two major parties. And increasingly there are no differences between the Democrats and Republicans. It's becoming a one party system in the US, too. People don't really have a voice. There is a growing social and economic crisis, and this is occurring while the economy is still basically pretty good. There are many signs that the economy will be bad again. And when that happens, there will be big trouble in the United States. But the American working class is fighting back. There are important labor struggles, like the Machinists' strike against Eastern Airlines and the Pittston coal miners strike. Last month, we had a massive demonstration, like this, in Washington, DC. Half a million people marched to support the right of women to have safe and legal abortions."

The same woman who spoke up earlier stepped forward and asked: "So what about the controls of the law to . . . the legal system?"

Before I could answer, Wang, weary and not used to the marathon translating, said: "I must have a break."

"Can someone else translate?" I asked the crowd. "Thank you very much," I said warmly to Wang.

"You're welcome," replied Wang.

"So who can translate here?" I repeated.

"I don't know," answered Wang.

"Do you want me to continue? About the legal system? The legal system is really a system for the rich in the United States to perpetuate their rule. The average person doesn't have enough money to hire big lawyers, so it's easier for the rich and powerful to use the legal system for their benefit."

"So the legal system in America is for the rich people, not for the common people?" Wang perceptively asked.

"Right."

"So it is true that the legal system is only a tool for the government to control the people?" Wang asked.

"Yes. Exactly."

"We have heard the legal system and the human rights is very strong in America. But that's not true after listening to your speech," stated Wang.

"As I said, on paper there is this respect. . ."

Wang translated the beginning of my sentence.

" . . . for human rights, and it's true that most of the American people feel very strong about those freedoms in our constitution. As I said, it's not fascism and we do have some rights. But it's important to keep in mind that the rights we have were not given to us, they were fought for by the people, in struggles of the working people. The American Revolution, that's where our constitution came from. And today, those rights are increasingly under attack by the government. Not in a radical, wholesale, way, you know but chipping away, undermining, what they can get away with."

Wang nodded his head. "There's a news broadcast over there," he said, pointing to the headquarters area by the Monument of the People's Heroes. "Would you like to come with me?"

"Yeah, sure, I'll check it out," I replied.

"Okay, if you like to check it out, please follow me," Wang said with a smile.

"Okay." I turned to the group of demonstrators who had been listening to us all this time and, waving the peace sign said, "Thank you. Thank you very much. Peace."

I followed Wang through the densely packed square towards the Monument.

"Wang, there's a news broadcast coming up. From the government or the students?"

"From the students," he answered. "This is very complex here." Half way there, he turned around and said to me with that characteristic twinkle in his eye, "There's someone I want you to meet, Nivek."

It took us ten minutes to reach the Monument. Wang escorted me to the third and top level of the granite obelisk, a vantage point which provided a panoramic view of the massive mobilization that filled Tiananmen Square. A large crowd was assembled in front of the Monument's steps. The mood was excited, spirited, militant and tense. Voices blared from the square's speakers. Suddenly, a man dressed in what looked like a Bhuddist monk's robes began making an emotional speech.

"What's he saying?" I asked Wang.

"He's a religious leader who supports the students. He said the movement is more than . . . people. The May 4th movement 70 years ago, not really demonstration for freedom now. He says the student movement now shows the way. He supports the students and their demands for democratic rights. He praises their courage and determination."

Wang said to me: "As I was saying, there's someone I want you to meet. He's a friend of mine. He's commander 008 on the Square. Perhaps you would like to talk with him, Nivek?"

"Yes, of course. Thanks, Wang," I said to him, catching my breath. I realized how lucky I'd been to meet Wang. Not only was he an excellent interpreter and familiar with the United States, but he had connections to a Tiananmen commander, and he wanted me to interview him. Perhaps Wang's friend would be able to shed more light on the Beijing Autonomous Workers Federation, and the report that three of its activists had been arrested by the authorities.

"Wait here," Wang told me. "I will find my friend."

It was now after ten. I scanned the inspirational scene in Tiananmen, momentarily intoxicated by the swirling flags and balloons; the hundreds of thousands of citizens in the square; and above all the stirring sight represented by the Goddess of Democracy and Freedom facing off with Chairman Mao. Vendors continued to cart in supplies of food and beverages for the students maintaining the Tiananmen occupation. The government's attempts to isolate the students from the general population did not appear to be succeeding.

A short while later, Wang returned with a handsome young man holding a walkie-talkie at his side.

"This is Liu," introduced Wang.

"Nee-how," I said cheerfully, clearly enunciating the Chinese word for "hello." We shook hands warmly. Liu did not speak a word of English, but I felt an instant rapport between us, as I had felt with Wang.

"Ah, nee-how," Liu said with a friendly grin.

Wang spoke to Liu for several minutes, then turned to me and said, "I told him how we met and a little about yourself. He is very interested in talking further with you. He likes you as well."

Liu spoke for several minutes, and Wang translated his remarks.

"He says that on May 20th, he led a crowd of 3,000 people in blocking an army division from entering Beijing. He says he signed an agreement between the students and the troops. The agreement said the troops would go back and would never fire on the people."

"He did? When?"

"May 23rd," Wang replied. "He has the agreement with the demands in his hands."

Sure enough, Liu was grasping a folded piece of paper. He said something to Wang, who turned to me and said, "He must return to his commander duties now. But he would like very much for you to join us for dinner tomorrow evening. Then we can talk in more detail. And perhaps you would be interested in having a copy of the agreement?"

"Oh yes, yes," I replied enthusiastically.

"Very good. Why don't you meet us in front of the Beijing Hotel at say, 6 o'clock. Okay?"

I agreed to meet Wang, Liu, and Liu's close friend Yang at the designated time and location the following evening. We shook hands, and then they were gone. It was now just before 11, and the intensity of the demonstration in Tiananmen had not abated. In front of me, a succession of speakers followed the Bhuddist monk to the emotional cheers of the large crowd. One didn't have to understand Chinese to surmise that the speakers were denouncing the government and articulating the masses' desire for democratic rights.

Behind me, at the foot of the Monument, a commotion attracted my attention. A young man and woman, both Westerners, were bathed in the lights of television cameras and speaking into several microphones; a press conference was taking place. The man's name was Steve Jolley, and from the substance and tone of his remarks, it was clear he was a British communist.

"I'm from the youth wing of the British Labor Party, the Young Socialists, and I'm here to bring the students and working people of China a message of solidarity from the working class of England. Your courageous struggle for democracy is inspiring working people all over the world. I'm here to say that we are especially inspired by the formation of an independent trade union here in Beijing, the Beijing Autonomous Workers Federation. This action by the Chinese workers proves to the world that there is an alternative to Stalinism, that socialism and democracy are not incompatible. The Tiananmen Square demonstrations prove that socialist democracy can be achieved when the workers and students unite."

Next, the young woman stepped up to the microphones.

"My name is Angie Covina, and I represent the New Democratic Party from Canada. I'm here to say that we fully support the historic events here in Beijing because they demonstrate not only that democratic principles can be installed under socialism. . .The students and workers should be proud of their activities and there are many workers and other organizations that are behind and support what is happening presently and that they should continue to fight and to succeed for their principles and revolution."

Obviously I wasn't the only person in Beijing with a Trotskyist background.

Those Chinese who understood, and there seemed to be quite a few of them, cheered and applauded the two speakers' solidarity statements. A BBC cameraman thought otherwise.

"The British Labor Party? Hah! If he's for the students, I'm for Li Peng," I overheard him telling a colleague. The press conference was over, but the spirit in Tiananmen Square was still going strong as midnight approached. As far as one looked, the square was packed with humanity. There were easily 100,000 in attendance. I walked through the square toward the Avenue of Eternal Peace for the short walk to the Minzu. When I passed the Goddess, she was surrounded by many hundreds of admirers. The warm Beijing night air was filled with the clanging of bicycle bells. Wasn't anyone sleeping in Beijing these days?

A friend of mine who had traveled frequently to Beijing told me that it was usually a rather sleepy town at night; things slowed down to a quiet stop no later than nine. But these days, China's capital was giving New York City a run for its money.

"I want to wake up in a city that doesn't sleep."

I passed the Zhonganhai compound, where the half dozen soldiers stood stoically in front of the 500 students and workers staring them down. While a weary American journalist collapsed in his hotel room, the newly politicized city of Beijing was still going strong.

Commander 008 on Tiananmen Square beaming by the unfinished Goddess of Democracy and Freedom.

**Chapter 5: Wednesday, May 31st**

The headlines in the Chinese Communist Party newspapers showed that the government was stepping up its slick propaganda campaign against the students. "Children's Day Events Off Around Tiananmen" read a headline in the China Daily, the English-language version of the People's Daily, the official newspaper of the Communist Party. The article announced (and then bemoaned the fact) that the Children's Day and other events had to be cancelled due to the ongoing occupation of the square by the pro-democracy students. The author openly attempted to pit the college students from their younger brothers and sisters in grade school.

Children in Beijing will have to have a "simple holiday" today for International Children's Day as many activities which had been planned to be held in or around Tiananmen Square have had to be cancelled or moved to other places. A national conference on population and birth control had also been scheduled at the Great Hall of the People, at which Premier Li Peng had been invited to make a speech.

All these activities have had to be cancelled and the committee decided to hold only one celebration ceremony, in the China National Children's Centre, known as Guanyuan, some 5 kilometres away from Tiananmen Square, the official said.

Her statements were supported by an official from the Cultural Palace of Working People, in the northwest of the square, who said since Premier Li Peng announced martial law in Beijing, all "public buildings and parks" around Tiananmen Square had been closed.

He listed the public spots as the Great Hall of the People, west of the square; Chairman Mao's Memorial Hall, in the north centre; Museum of Chinese Revolution and Museum of Chinese History, on the east side; the Forbidden City in the north side, and Zhonghshan Park, on the northwest side of the square.

"International Children's Day is coming and we are sorry that the activities scheduled here have been cancelled," said the official, adding that no order had been received as to when all these places would be reopened.

Recently the Beijing Daily published a letter from Fengtai No 5 Middle School calling on all the college students encamped in Tiananmen Square to "return the square" to them, the "Young Pioneers" who "dreamed to see the raising of the national flag, and to ask the uncles of the flag team to teach them the revolutionary traditions."

"However, it seemed clear that in spite of all the pleas, the college students will not be moving out for them."

**I was thrilled over my planned dinner date at the Beijing Hotel with Wang, Liu and Yang, but first there was official business in the afternoon with Mr. Xing and China Central Television (CCT). My job was to review films from the archives for their suitability for public broadcasting stations in the United States. The morning was free, however, so I decided to ride my bicycle down Changan Avenue to scope out the Beijing Hotel.**

**Before leaving, I gave some mementos to the hotel staff on the 20th floor. My ex-wife had suggested that I take a few "American" gifts to give to any Chinese friends I'd make in Beijing. She gave me a stack of major league baseball cards and a half dozen of those small American flags to take with me. The young men who cleaned the rooms every day didn't speak a word of English, but they were friendly chaps, and seemed very pleased with the flags and downright fascinated with those archetypal representatives of American culture--baseball cards.**

The further one got from Tiananmen Square, the more normal was the situation. That is, aside from the large congregations of citizens that had gathered at every intersection reading the pro-democracy proclamations or just listening to one another, Beijing was functioning as it always did. The working people were getting up and going to work on their bikes and buses; citizens were doing their shopping and visiting. Contrary to the government's charge that the Tiananmen protests were causing chaos and wreaking havoc on the city, working people were running things just fine. Except for some travel jams caused by the demonstrations, Beijing's citizens seemed to be handling things very well. And not a soldier or even a policeman was in sight. The only signs of governmental authority to be seen were the traffic monitors sitting in their booths at the crowded intersections.

"Beijing Hails the 1990 Asian Games" read the colorful billboards prominently displayed along Changan Avenue. The underlying message of the young, smiling Chinese athlete gracing the sign was unmistakable: let's put the current turmoil behind us and look forward to a prouder moment when we host the Asian Games.

One thing was clear as I rode down the demarcated bicycle lanes on Changan--the strict Maoist Puritanism of years past that prohibited public displays of affection between men and women was nowhere in sight. Young lovers no longer were hiding their feelings for each other. Beijing's young people looked strikingly similar to the teenagers hanging out in both New York and San Francisco's Chinatowns--right down to the long, hip haircuts, cigarettes and blue jeans.

One cultural difference did jump out at this visitor from the United States. Beijing's parents enjoy a short cut to the messy problem of diapers. The little ones were wearing these shorts with the bottoms cut out so they can just squat whenever and wherever nature calls. Despite the public sanitation problems, I had the feeling the concept would sound extremely attractive to American parents.

Mr. Xing's taxi picked my associate and I up at the Minzu just before one pm and whisked up downtown to the CCT building. We took an elevator to the TV Ministry's archives in the basement where we were met by Ma Jian, adviser to the China Teleplay Production Center. Ma's demeanor was a good deal sterner than Mr. Xing's; he didn't seem happy with the events enveloping the capital. We spent the afternoon watching more footage of the People's Liberation Army's battles with the Japanese and Chiang Kai Chek's Nationalist forces. Then we went further back in time to the 1911 Chinese bourgeois democratic revolution, when Dr. Sun Yat Sen led the revolutionary democrats against the reactionary forces of feudalism. The interesting took a turn for the grisly when we watched a political prisoner beheaded by an executioner's sword. It was not a good omen.

After several hours of this, I was more than ready for the rendezvous with Wang and his friends. The friendly taxi driver dropped off Mr. Xing at his TV Ministry office and drove me back to the Minzu. Shortly before six I set off on my bike for the Beijing Hotel, a 15-minute ride down the Avenue of Eternal Peace. This Wednesday's evening rush hour was even more chaotically congested than usual, and I was having difficulty keeping pace with the sea of bicycles. Three blocks from the Beijing Hotel my sneaker lace got caught in the right pedal, causing me to lose control. I spent three full minutes maneuvering the bike to a slow crawl before I went flying off the bike right in front of two elderly women sitting in their chairs. They started laughing, as did the crowd of people in the immediate area who had witnessed my fall.

Red-faced, I picked myself up off the ground and dusted off my pants. My initial emotion was one of humiliation. I had made a fool of myself in a foreign country. But the women were laughing in such a disarming, amusing way that they inspired me to turn the embarrassment into an advantage. They were inviting me to see them as laughing with me instead of at me. It would never have happened that way in New York.

I started acting like a circus clown, carrying on and mocking myself in English for my clumsiness; reenacting the fall with pantomime-like gestures. The audience roared its approval, and I came away from this misadventure ready to meet, Wang, Liu and Yang.

I finally arrived at the steps of the Beijing Hotel ten minutes past six to find they were nowhere in sight. I felt a pang of disappointment; perhaps something had happened to prevent them from coming. Five minutes later, I saw Wang, Liu, and Yang emerge from the front door. I waved to them and met them halfway down the front steps.

"Hello again, Nivek. This is Yang, Liu's friend."

I shook hands warmly with Yang, a large, engaging young man with a crew cut.

He spoke no English but we hit it off immediately.

"It's not safe to meet at this hotel," whispered Wang. "One of the activists from the Beijing Workers Autonomous Union was arrested here. We shall go instead to an other restaurant. Better security there."

Liu nodded in agreement and smiled, fully understanding what Wang had just old me. As a Tiananmen Square commander, Liu was in the most danger. We were taking no chances at the Beijing Hotel.

They took me to a family restaurant two blocks off Changan.

"You will not be disappointed," Wang said to me, "it's the best food in Beijing."

It was in a building that looked like one of those two-story motels on the New Jersey Shore. We were led to a table next to the only other dinner party in the restaurant. Liu immediately looked behind the curtains; I guessed he was checking for possible cameras or microphones.

There was only one ground rule governing the dinner conversation: Wang requested no political discussions at the table. We could not be too careful given Liu's position. Wang promised we could talk all the politics we desired later at Yang's apartment in Old Beijing.

Instead, I settled down for the best Chinese food I'd ever tasted and drank beer with my three friends. Liu thoroughly enjoyed drinking with this American journalist who had initially declined to drink, but was unable to refuse Liu's friendly insistence. After a few rounds of delicious Chinese beer, Yang looked at met perceptively and remarked, "Of all the people in the world to be in Beijing at this time, it should be you."

Yang gave me his card which indicated he was a photo journalist with the China Market Publishing Corporation and the China Prospect Publishing House. Everyone in China possesses their own cards. As an American visitor who couldn't return the favor by giving one of his own, I felt embarrassed, as if I were violating a universal norm. Liu, the former student-turned truck driver, had a card which said he was manager of an arts and stamp store in Beijing's free market district, another byproduct of Deng's decade-old reliance on private enterprise and market mechanisms.

After an hour and a half, we got on our bikes and made our way through the twists and turns of the back alleys and rundown tenements of Old Beijing. This part of the city had not yet enjoyed the benefits of Dengs pro-capitalist tilt; the poverty had increased for these workers. If Beijing looked like a hybrid of New York and Hanoi, Old Beijing was leaning heavily toward Hanoi's side. Most apartments consisted of only one room with no kitchen or bathroom; the public urinals were outside the apartments.

The sight of three Chinese taking an American through the streets of Old Beijing drew stares from the people in the neighborhoods. I had the distinct feeling that they knew exactly what was going on and who I was--a Western journalist who would tell the truth about their fight for democracy.

At last we arrived at Yang's modest but comfortable one room apartment. Yang quickly proved to be a hospitable host. He fired up a pot of tea on the stove and invited me to make myself comfortable on his couch. The tea would flow nonstop the entire evening.

Liu began by showing me a stack of photographs from the earlier Tiananmen demonstrations and the May 23rd citizens blockade that prevented the army from taking the square.

I asked Liu to explain his role in negotiating the agreement with the army not to attack the people.

Liu's face brightened. "The students talked directly to the soldiers. We told them that the People's Liberation Army belonged to the people. How could the soldiers attack the people? It was a contradiction they could not answer."

"This is the workers independent union," Wang proclaimed, pointing to the photograph of the union's tent and banners in Tiananmen.

"That's the banner of the new union?" I asked him.

"Yes, that's a sign. That's from May 19th," he replied.

"What kind of factories do the workers of the new union work in?" I asked Liu.

Liu answered through the interpretive abilities of Wang, who showed no signs of weariness from Tuesday night's extensive duties.

"From every area, almost every factory in Peking," said Liu.

"Is that one of the machines from that factory?" I inquired, pointing to a machine in the photograph.

"Yeah, yeah," Liu affirmed.

"Tell me more about the Beijing Autonomous Workers Federation. When and how did it begin? What are its goals?" I asked.

"The independent union was first seen publicly on May 15th, but had been passing out leaflets since last month. A tent was set up in Tiananmen Square. One hundred workers were there. They marched in the May 17th demonstration, in support of the students on hunger strike. Support grew for the new union. On May 19th, workers formed the Beijing Autonomous Workers Federation."

"How many workers did it represent?"

"The federation represented workers from more than 40 industrial regions, from all over China. Perhaps 100,000 from Beijing," Liu said.

"Is Liu a member of the independent union?" I asked Wang.

"No, he is not a member. But he knows a lot of people. He is a commander in the square. You remember he was a truck driver before a shop owner. Before that he was a student, you know. So the students and the workers know and respect him," Wang said smiling broadly.

"What are the independent union's demands?" I asked.

"The workers have many grievances," Liu began. "Their living standards have been very bad. The lack of democracy in the workplace, in the plants. The workers have no say in decision-making. There is also a big gap between the workers and the managers of the plants."

I asked how the union was getting out its message to the people.

"They have been broadcasting over the speakers in Tiananmen, from their tents," said Liu. "They have been distributing leaflets at the square and in the streets."

"What did they say in the leaflets?"

"They criticized the official union, the union controlled by the Party. They called for more democracy in the labor movement. Much has happened this week. The arrest of the three union activists that you know about. One of them was in the Beijing Hotel, where we were to meet tonight for dinner." Liu laughed, then turned serious.

"Just a few days ago, the union published its statutes. They called for an independent, autonomous, democratic organization to defend the workers interests. They set up decision-making bodies, a general meeting, a standing committee, and an executive committee. The statutes have a pledge for all members: 'I voluntarily will follow and observe the constitution and the law of the state, will observe the regulations of this organization, will carry out persistently the work for the interest of the working class.'"

"That doesn't sound like it came from counterrevolutionaries," I said with a smile.

"No, not from counterrevolutionaries," Liu quickly agreed. "The autonomous union wants to organize a democratic workers union. The workers do not want to challenge the Party's rule. They want the union to be legal, to conform to the constitution of the People's Republic. They do not even demand the right to strike."

"Can you tell me more about the types of workers represented by the federation?" I asked.

"In Beijing, all kinds of workers, from the factories, from the offices, journalists. Office workers were joining the students in the Tiananmen demonstrations in early May. Workers from the Capital Iron and Steel Factory, the Capital Hospital, No. 1 Machine Tool Factory, Beijing Petrochemical Company, Pipe Music Instruments Factory, Beijing Electric Utilities Co., Railways Ministry, Xidan Supermarkets, People's Bank of China.

"Wow, that's some cross-section of workers. In such a short period of time."

Wang nodded in agreement. "Yes, we hear that several hundred workers have signed membership cards at the union's tent in the square. The government is worried. That is why they arrested the three union activists."

I asked what the attitude was of the official labor unions toward the Autonomous Workers Federation.

"At first, the Party union [the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU)] supported the demands for democracy. On Friday, May 26th, it supported the demonstrations by the students and said they were patriotic. We hear some workers from the ACFTU marched under the independent union's banner at Tiananmen demonstrations. Can we continue with the photographs?"

"Yes, sure. Please go on."

Wang showed a photograph of a huge mobilization in Tiananmen Square.

"Several hundred thousand people," I remarked.

"Yeah," affirmed Wang and Liu. Yang poured another round of tea in our cups.

"Was that around the time when Zhao Zhang or Li Peng spoke to demonstrators in Tiananmen?"

"Yeah, that morning Li Peng made a speech in the square," said Wang. "And a lot of people angry from the meeting."

"That's the Monument of the People's Heroes, right?"

"Yeah."

"That's the army, that same truck, the army looks like they're supporting the students."

"A huh."

He showed me a picture of a helicopter hovering above Tiananmen Square.

"I heard about them. Haven't seen any of them since I'm here, though."

Wang pointed to a picture of Liu with his walkie-talkie in the square.

"This means he's a commander," he said proudly. "So this picture is of Zhou en Lai,” he said.

"Does this indicate support for Zhou?"

"Yes," answered Wang. He pointed to a banner shown in the next photograph.

"Take it easy and nowhere to go. Passion."

"Passion?"

"Passion."

"Keep cool. I understand." I wasn't sure I did, however.

Wang explained, "This is said by very great people in China in the 30s and 40s. This is a great writer in our history. This is a sign that says: "Workers and students together."

"Yeah, that's what I like to see," I said enthusiastically.

"You understand Chinese?" asked Wang, misinterpreting my spirit.

"No, but I like that."

"That's from the independent workers union," explained Wang.

"Does Liu know the union activists who were arrested this week?" I inquired.

"No,"Liu answered.

As we reviewed pictures of the massive Tiananmen crowds in mid-May, I remarked to my hosts, "I'm struck by the incredible discipline and organization. It has been very inspiring. I noticed there are many cameras covered up in the square. Did the students cover them so the authorities couldn't take pictures?"

"Yeah," said Wang. "And a lot of the kaas. You know kaas?"

"Kaas?"

"Made from paper," clarified Wang.

"Kaas," I repeated, still not sure what he was referring to.

"The leader of the association of kaas in Peking with 300 people, members, everyone with 1 kaat on the square, and let it fly."

Wang could see the puzzlement in my expression.

"Gone With the Wind," he offered.

Not long ago, while watching TV news footage from the Beijing Spring, it finally dawned on me what Wang was trying to say. The film showed hundreds of kites let loose above a large Tiananmen demonstration. Even the association of kites had gotten into the act and been infected by the spirit of the pro-democracy campaign.

"We were talking about the army," I said, content to leave the "kaas" matter alone.

"So before martial law, a lot of troops come from everyplace to Peking, so not for the students, but for the situations in the top levels of our party and the leaders. I think a lot of persons want to make some change with the army. So you have your army, I have my army. So, this is battle between high leaders, not the students. But students and citizens of Peking, do no allow one soldier into Peking."

"Even now?"

"Even now. It's different situation. One situation is between the soldiers and non-soldiers, students and citizens. And the other case is our leaders. It's complex."

He reminded me of Mr. Xing's constant refrain, "It's all very complicated."

"Oh, here's the Goddess of Democracy and Freedom," I exclaimed, pointing to the statue in a series of photos. "That was a brilliant tactic. It seemed as if the government, on the surface, was wearing down the students. Here's a headline in the Herald Tribune," I said, pulling out the newspaper article, "that turned out to be wrong. 'Tired Students Wilting Under Li's Pressure.' That was before the statue. I don't think this headline applies now."

Liu reacted to the headline. "Not true, not true."

Wang continued: "Because a lot of reasons, you know, students thought citizens have a lot of support, send them food, every day and night. Citizens get tired. And masses got pressure from the factories, from the government."

Liu interjected, "I think the actions taken by the government is in answer to the movement. For two reasons. One is as the result of the problem inside of their group, the Party, someone to hold the power and someone to go away. This is one important problem, and the other problem is that the government thought the citizens can support the students for one or two or three days. Every person can give money, 10 or 5,000 yuan, one time, one day to the students. But what happens after three days? Perhaps the citizens work hard supporting the students."

Wang pointed to a muscular-looking man standing next to Liu in a photograph.

"This is a guard for him [Liu]."

“He knows martial arts?" I asked.

"Yeah, yeah," Liu answered.

Wang, pointing to Liu, said to me, "He's been in the square every day."

"He's an activist, maybe not a leader."

"Yeah, because he has a friendship with the students. Because he was a student, too." Wang handed me the next picture and said, "This is the Buddhist, last night."

"The one we saw last night supporting the students?"

"Yeah. Liu's number is 008 on the square," Wang explained, pointing to the numerals on Liu's back in a photo.

"I have a question. Throughout the day, every day, I see large and small groups of people looking at the mimeographed messages on the walls. The demonstration that was called, the arts and crafts festival that was held Monday night. Was that event written about on the mimeographed messages?"

"No," replied Liu. "They are some messages just for the situations in Peking, in the movement."

Wang laughed as he showed me photos of a Chinese rock band jamming at one of the Tiananmen demonstrations.

"Rock music. There's a disco."

As Yang poured another round of tea, Liu began speaking again.

"After the martial law, after the events of May 22, the fighting with the army, about 45 students were hurt by the army."

This reminded me of Professor Bai's story.

"Right, yes. I heard about that. I met the dean of that foreign language institute. He's a good man."

"He leads 300 workers from center of city to the place supporting the students," Wang explained.

"Yes, I know. He himself told me that. He led 300 workers to support students who were injured by the army. My first day here, Sunday, he sent two interpreters to meet me at the demonstration. We were able to interview a student leader from Inner Mongolia. The authority of the student leaders. How was it decided that those two are in charge of finances and you and you are in charge of supplies. Did the students have meetings to decide on assignments?"

Liu replied, "After the movement from every college and university, the students meet together and decide, who, which university, which college in charge of financial or the guards, or communications."

"Let's talk about the press, the Western press. My first day here, Sunday, I had press passes and it was difficult to get straight answers. The students were rather guarded, afraid to talk to me. I finally got the interview with the Inner Mongolia student, and it was a good talk. But what kind of relationship with the press does the leadership have? Is the leadership looking to have the press cover what's going on? And what are your feelings about the press? The other night we talked about how when the woman asked the journalists to sit down, when the students were building the Goddess, they seemed to be not caring about the students' welfare, but they just wanted to get those pictures. I myself last night, at the press conference up by the monument. Remember there were greetings of solidarity given by the British Labor Party activists and the woman from the Canadian New Democratic Party. I overheard comments by the press. Someone said, 'Oh, British Labor Party. If he's for the students, I'm for Li Peng.' I was very angry to hear that. I detect a feeling among some of the press, they don't really support the students; they're there . . ."

"Just to get the news," finished Wang.

"Yeah, they don't really care; everybody should be serving them to get their story back."

Liu spoke. "It is the students' opinion now, the press in China is controlled by the government and the military. So there is no way to show their feelings, to impress, what they think to the society, to the people. So every press from the Western countries to come here, even some press only for the story, to take pictures, don't care. But it's still good for the movement."

I said, "So the students recognize that whatever the shortcomings of the press here, they need them to get the story out; they recognize the press is a valuable tool for getting the word out to the world. I was glad to hear the solidarity messages from the British Labor Party and New Democratic Party representatives. I want to say to people here, that, I know some people such as President Bush, but I want to say to the working people in China, the students, intellectuals, farmers, you have no friend in the United States government, in the imperialist governments. Your friends, your support is from the working people around the world. Have no illusions that you have friends in Washington, DC."

"I understand that," Liu told me.

I continued, "The government in Washington likes dealing with people like Deng Xiaoping, Gorbachev, Breshnev, Li Peng. They can do business with them, they can make deals, have detente. They would not like to see socialist democracy in China. That would be a threat to them."

Liu replied, "Every government just cares for their own business, not for their people. The Chinese students and people know that."

I continued, "Keep in mind that the Stalinists in Moscow, Beijing, Warsaw, with them in power, the U.S. government is able to say to the American people: 'That's communism. It's bad. You don't want that.' If there were socialist democracy in these countries, that would be a model for the American people to look to and say, 'That's what we need here.' So they like having the Stalinists in power. Because the bureaucrats in Peking or Moscow are not really revolutionary internationalists, like the Communist Party in Cuba. Fidel Castro. If you notice, Washington, can't do business with Fidel; they hate him, they hate the Cubans, because politically they represent a threat; the Cuban Revolution shows that socialism can work, that working people can run the country. They can make detente with Moscow and Peking, but they can't with Havana, because Havana is run by revolutionary Marxists who don't sell out."

Liu responded, "The governments, even Moscow and Washington, Peking, whenever there are meetings . . . Students understand that situation. Students here don't believe American government can resolve problems of Peking movement. No way. They understand them. They hope every friend, from tourists, the press, to make the people of our country understand what's happening in Peking. And now, a lot of money comes from Hong Kong and other countries. Tourists and friends have been in Peking and understand what's happening in Peking, and they come back and tell people what's happening in Peking. And they come back and support student movement."

Liu paused for a moment, then spoke again.

"If the Congress starts meeting, students will stay in the square."

I said: "I know that earlier, the political demands being raised by the students, which are good ones, an end to corruption, an end to privilege for the Communist Party, more democracy, more freedom of the press, recognition of the student union, of the students as a movement. And I know earlier, one of the demands was to broadcast negotiations openly between the students and the government. The government doesn’t seem to be seriously responding to that. And I've asked students in the square if they want to talk to the government. The students seem to have lost all faith in the government; they don't believe the government wants to talk to them. On the other hand, the government seems very shrewd, conscious of the support the students enjoy from the people, so it is careful to describe the students as patriotic. 'We appreciate the students' good intentions and patriotism,' they say. They seem to be distinguishing between the students as a whole and the small group of leaders, those they condemn as the troublemakers."

"Troublemakers," Wang repeated.

"But they're saying it in a language which is alarming. When they call people counterrevolutionaries or traitors, that is not a good sign. Usually that is a preparation for a crackdown."

Wang responded, "Now our government as a result of their own problems between their own factions, different opinions in different groups. And to keep peace in the government. . . deal with the students, deal with the workers. Up to now, ten workers arrested and some students also arrested. So students understand the situation and they decide to stay in square or come back to universities or colleges. They want to make dialogue. If government doesn't want to make dialogue, they will make another demonstration."

I asked Liu how the students viewed the infighting occurring within the senior leadership of the Communist Party.

Liu replied, "The students' position is that we wait for the government to straighten themselves out and unify their position. When they are ready to speak with us, we are ready."

Liu paused briefly, smiled, and continued talking. "If there are troublemakers in the student movement, it's only the government lying, playing a game. The students are against some things that happened in the last 10 years, especially for the privileges, officials and high leaders and their families have more power. The party bureaucrats have been taking more and more privileges for themselves. That is why there are troublemakers. So this made the ordinary people angry with that. So this is what happened, the real reason for the movement and the troublemakers."

"Liu, what are the short and long-term goals of the students?" I asked.

"The short-term goals of the student movement are: 1) make a dialogue with the government, the other is for the government to recognize the students as a movement, the third is according to the recent situation, the students ask that the government reverse the Premier's [Li Peng] position. These are the short-term goals. And for long-range goal--democracy. Democracy for all the people, not just the students. A democratic revolution, not just to oppose corruption." He paused, took a breath, and continued.

"In our society there is some trouble . . . Every student knows that the statue is not forever, that she will not stand on the square forever. It might be one week, or 30 days, it's okay, it's enough. Because everyone knows in every people's heart she will last forever. Our government said something about the square tomorrow. Children's Day. This afternoon, an announcement by the students, said to the children, 'You can come tomorrow. Sing some songs, children will come from everywhere to square.'

"So there will be a Children's Day tomorrow? I read in the paper that the government had to cancel it because of the demonstrations. But the students support it, they say, 'come.'"

"Yeah, come," added Wang.

"So there should be a big crowd tomorrow?"

"Yeah," Wang confirmed. They broke out in laughter, and Yang poured yet another round of tea.

Wang announced, "There will be the Children's Day tomorrow. This afternoon, students in Tiananmen Square say children will come to square, little brothers and sisters, we'll celebrate Children's Day together. So students stay in Tiananmen Square, and ask the government to make dialogue with students. The students plan to stay in the square until the convening of the National People's Congress on June 20th. This is important because soldiers and officers from around China will come to see what is happening in Tiananmen Square, and to ask the government to hold a dialogue with the students. If the National People's Congress opens, and a lot of students stay in square, that situation will be very difficult for government. And this is true, a lot of the students' teams from Peking University and other universities and colleges to every province to the south, to the west, to the east. Up to now there's four, you know four times, second time, third time, four times to send teams."

"Different teams?"

"Yes, different teams. And this money from the people, even from the Hong Kong people. A lot of the people send money to students and students use this money for the teams. And now, a lot of the students who stay in Tiananmen Square are students who come from outside Peking City, but the students in Peking City go outside Peking. They change."

"Wang, the students' meetings, are they held on the square, or in secret someplace else?"

"Both. Some meetings are held in the guarded tents in the square and a lot of meetings are held in the colleges and universities."

"Wang, where did the authority of the student leaders come from? How did the leaders get to be leaders? Is it just that, the people came forward, as in any struggle, the leaders lead, and the people recognize who the leaders are because they prove themselves in struggle? This all happened so fast. There was no struggle, at least on the surface before April. All of a sudden you have the leaders. Did they come up spontaneously?"

Liu answered, "It began earlier than April. After the Chinese festival, there were meetings, and they decided to make democracy movement at the time of the May 4th movement, the movement that happened 70 years ago; they wanted for the memories of the celebration of the movement, they wanted to make meetings and speeches for the demonstrations, and for the freedom. This only happened in the case of the death of Hu, this is the Secretary General of our Party, Hu YaoBang. This is the reason why it happened."

Wang spoke next. "The leader's name, Wang Dan, he comes from Peking University, Department of History. He formed a seminar for the democracy movement between the students every week or every month to discuss some things about China, about political problems and economic problems, long before the movement. And they formed organization. At first, the students went to the official student union in universities. They asked the union to do some things the students asked. But the official union did not agree, so the students decided at last, a lot of students didn't agree with the union, so they formed another union, before the demonstration."

"Wang, I want to ask you about the role of women in the student movement. They seem to be playing leadership roles; I'm thinking of the young woman who is always speaking through megaphones in the square. Monday night she kept telling the journalists to sit down while the students were building the tower for the Goddess."

"Oh yes, women are very active in the student movement," said Wang, smiling broadly. "Women's liberation here in China as well. That woman you speak of, is Chai Ling. She was elected commander of all Tiananmen Square, you know," he said with pride.

"Commander of the square?" I asked in amazement. "Wow, I'm impressed, Wang. How important do you view the formation of this independent union we talked about earlier? What prospects are there for its growth, given the pressures on the unions, given the control of the Party, the pressure it exerts through the factory managers? Is there the recognition, for the fight for democracy in China to continue and grow, that some kind of workers' organization will have to be formed in alliance with the student organization now? Do the students feel they can lead the fight for democracy, and that they are the social force to win? Or, is there the feeling that, 'Hey, we started it, but sooner or later, we have to make alliances with the workers.'"

Liu, through the translation, thought I was still talking about the independent student union.

"One question about the students' independent union, I think they could stand up for longer and do some things to take room in the society, in the universities, and make agreement with the government. That is their goal. But who knows what will happen. And a lot of students recognize there must be an alliance with the workers union. But you know now, in our country, the workers unions are controlled by the Party and the independent unions are very weak, and therefore the educational level for the workers is very low."

"So how significant is this independent workers union? It's a good sign, right? Are there prospects for it to grow, or will it be a small group, repressed by the government?"

"Small is better than nothing," Wang said, with all the wisdom of an ancient Chinese scholar.

Liu added, "So anyway, the students always to make the rule to stand on the truth. It's the only thing they can do. If workers didn't come out and follow students, the movement means nothing. Everybody understands that, even Chairman Mao. Workers are the strong force in society, so, there's a long way to go."

"So, the union is viewed as a very important beginning of the movement for democracy."

"Yeah, very important beginning," agreed Wang.

"It's been a victory, because the government has declared martial law, but at least up until now, there is no martial law. They tried to send the army, and the people stopped them, and the army did not fire. That?s martial law on paper."

"On paper. On paper." Wang laughed. "That's great. Is there any place in the world, in history, like martial law in Beijing?"

"I don't think so, not like this," I responded. "But it's a situation that cannot go on. There's going to have to be some kind of resolution, or the struggle will have to be taken to another level. Wang, have you lost all faith in communism?" I asked.

"We still believe in communism," replied Wang. "But Deng and Li are not the right communists. They're Stalinists."

For the first time Yang spoke up, and Wang dutifully interpreted. "He said, concerning another question you asked before, about the independent union. There's a case like in Poland."

"Solidarity," I offered.

"Yeah. After eight years, now the government acknowledges the union. So it takes a long time."

"The difference is that unlike China, the leadership of the pro-democracy movement in Poland originated with the industrial workers, with the unions. Perhaps that's because, fundamentally, the industrial working class is stronger than in China. China has been an agricultural country, a poor, peasant country up until the last few decades. The industrial workers have grown, and are stronger now since the last few decades of industrialization, but they lack the tradition, the years of industries in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Maybe that's why in China, it was the students who took the lead in fighting for democracy, whereas in those countries, the industrial workers did."

"Yeah, I agree with you," said Wang.

"In Poland, right from the beginning, the Solidarity movement was able to pose the question: who runs society? They were able to call for specific measures in their documents on how to run the economy, how to organize a planned economy, how to organize the different branches of the economy. The industrial workers were able to do that. But the students make no pretenses that they can pose an alternative. Indeed you say so: 'We're not talking about overthrowing the government. We want to reform it.'"

"But with no plan, right," Wang concurred.

"No plan," I continued. "The students say, 'We are students. We want democracy. We want to contribute to society, but we're not saying we have all the answers, or that we can run the economy. We're not in a position to.' That's one difference between Poland and China."

Wang said, "Peking's workers, it's a problem for them to keep coming to the demonstrations. Because they are easier to be controlled by the government than the students. They must get their salary, and to have the parents and the children, and things like that."

The evening was winding down. Yang seemed to indicate it was last call for tea. Wang showed me the last batch of Liu's photographs.

"This one says about Li Peng: This May 15th he said, 'Stop the trouble.' And May 21st, he said every previous leader must say, 'yes or no.' And May 23rd, this says he lies to all the students. And May 25th, there's a question mark next to him."

Wang paused before moving on to the next picture. "There's a picture of him hung."

With that solemn remark, and noting that it was after ten, I began saying good night to my three friends.

"Oh, Wang, before I forget. Remember last night you said Liu wanted me to have the agreement he negotiated between the army and students?"

Wang conferred briefly with Liu and then spoke. "He only has the original and does not want to part with it. But maybe we can get a copy for you. That gives us a reason to meet again, say, Friday night?"

We decided to meet Friday evening at 5 in a park near Beijing's free market district. Then we would go to Liu's shop in the district, before hitting another restaurant for dinner.

Wang offered to show me the way out of Old Beijing and ride with me for part of the way back to the Minzu. The Avenue of Eternal peace was humming with pedestrian and bicycle traffic, but halfway between Zhonghanan and Tiananmen we came upon a near riot. Wang told me the object of the crowd's wrath was the Beijing Municipal Building.

"It is where the government is holding the three union activists arrested the other day. The people are demanding their freedom."

The crowd of several thousand was extremely agitated; the mood was tense. For a while it looked as though the demonstrators were going to storm the building. Like so many of the street mobilizations that week, the protesters included students, workers and the omnipresent transients. But they were united in their anger at the government and the support for the autonomous workers federation seemed genuine.

After almost an hour, it was clear that nothing was going to occur at the municipal building. Wang bade me good night and I thanked him profusely for all he had done. We both looked forward to meeting again Friday night.

Before returning to the Minzu, I made a midnight stop by the Goddess of Democracy and Freedom in the square. There were still tens of thousands of demonstrators there, most of them congregating around the revered statue. Many were silently gazing up at the Goddess. The scene was surreal with a full yellow moon reigning supreme in China's sky. Suddenly, I realized that coming from one of the tents beneath the Goddess was the unmistakable sound of Elvis Presley singing, "It's Now or Never," followed by an encore of "Love Me Tender."

The peace sign. We Shall Overcome. The Statue of Liberty. And now Elvis. One could almost hear the boiling anger of Deng Xiaoping and Li Peng in the top level meetings of the Politburo. The bourgeois American influence has become too strong; it is corrupting our naive, idealistic youth. It must be stamped out.

**Chapter 6: Thursday, June 1st**

If Deng was upset Wednesday evening, he must have really hit the roof when he saw the front page photograph in the Hong Kong Standard. A young man was holding a sign in English that said: "Death to Deng Xiaoping." This brought a chill to my spine, for I knew that China's "paramount" leader was capable of reacting in a murderous rage at the insult, and there were hundreds of thousands of army troops not far away.

The possibility existed that the provocative, ultraleft slogan was the work of an agent provocateur. Wang, Liu and others I had spoken to in Tiananmen all spoke of undercover government agents running amok in Beijing throughout the protests. Then again, as May slipped into June and the war of the wills continued between the demonstrators and the government, there were signs that some in the pro-democracy movement were moving beyond the call for reforms and were now demanding the resignations and/or death of Deng and Li.

Thursday morning I had another appointment with Mr. Xing in the basement of China Central Television, reviewing more footage of Dr. Sun Yat Sen?s 1911 democratic revolution. By the afternoon, I was feeling under the weather, so I spent the rest of the day reading the newspapers for the latest developments.

The Herald Tribune reported an escalation in the government's counteroffensive against the pro-democracy campaign. On Wednesday, the Party staged "People of All Walks of Life Coming Together Against Chaos" rally in Daxing City, a rural town 20 miles south of Beijing, where townspeople burned in effigy astrophysicist Fang Lizhi, a prominent dissident leader. The government announced a crowd of 10,000 attended the rally, but reporters said that 3,000 was more accurate. Farmers and workers wearing straw hats marched to the stadium rally site under banners reflecting the government's line, proclaiming "We support Li Peng" and "We oppose the small group causing turmoil." The farmers also announced their support for the Communist Party's "four cardinal principles," which include allegiance to socialism, Communist Party leadership and proletarian dictatorship, and Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought.

While some rally participants were there out of genuine conviction, others said they were ordered by their bosses to attend. The fact that 40,000 army soldiers brought in to enforce martial law were living in Daxing may have been part of the arm-twisting. Rally officials distributed free ices to the demonstrators, but even a rally organizer admitted: "They don't know who Fang is. They just know they can't get their watermelons into Beijing."

Already the government was setting up Fang Lizhi as the chief fall guy of the pro-democracy movement, one of the leading "instigators" and "troublemakers" whom the Party had been directing its fire against. The "anti-chaos" rally was pushing the line that Fang's nefarious pro-democracy activity was the reason why farmers couldn't get their watermelons into the city, causing them to lose $100 a day in sales.

Beijing's Foreign Affairs office had tipped off the foreign press about the rally, which was interesting since under martial law the foreign media was prohibited from reporting about the protests. China's state-run media was reporting that more than half of the 50 universities and colleges in Shanghai had ended the pro-democracy boycott and resumed classes. As for Beijing, there were no reports of an end to the student boycott at Beijing University, although rumors circulated that students at some city colleges were going back to class.

Meanwhile, the students maintaining the vigil in Tiananmen Square were vowing to resist the government's attempt to evict them.

"We are now basically waiting for the government to take the initiative," said student leader Mo Bin. "Things are pretty calm with us. It?s the government who is nervous." These sentiments coincided exactly with what Liu had expressed the night before in Yang's apartment.

Though Fang and his wife Professor Li Shuxian had in recent years emerged as leading spokespersons for the pro-democracy camp, thus winning the students' respect, the couple had been keeping a noticeably lower profile during the Beijing Spring. After reports surfaced the week before that the government was planning to arrest intellectual dissidents, it was said Fang and Li had gone into hiding outside the city. Thursday's news reports announced that the pair had resurfaced in Beijing on Tuesday to squelch rumors of their arrest or that they had fled the capital.

"All these were rumors, we have never thought of escaping," said Fang. "It's impossible to flee China, there is no place to hide," added Professor Li.

Fang said he would be proud to be arrested in connection with "such a righteous and great democratic movement," but the pair stated they had purposely stayed away from the student movement, although the government kept referring to them as two of the "black hands," the "behind the scenes directors" of the demonstrations. Professor Li was outraged by these reports.

"My friends told me that they had read internal documents which accused me of instigating student unrest and instructing students to rebel against the government. They said these documents were issued by the Beijing municipal party committee and some provincial commissions of education," she said. "I will consider taking legal actions against the authorities concerned for libeling me.

"From the beginning, we expected to be accused by the authorities although we have kept our distance from the movement," said Professor Fang. ?"The authorities are accusing people of directing the student movement from behind the scenes to disgrace it.?" While the couple had engaged in discussions with student activists concerning the need for democracy in China, "We asked students not to come to our home during the last month to avoid trouble for them. We even did not go to Tiananmen Square to avoid giving the authorities an excuse to accuse us of directing the action from the background.

"We believe China needs people of conscience to tell the truth. If our government considers it a crime to advocate freedom, then it's autocratic and tyrannical. The student movement is the first democratic one since 1949. It is the first time the people have been made aware that they are masters in the country while the government is the public servant. The current movement is a great one. Even intellectuals have been awakened by the students."

Professor Li said some intellectuals active in the movement had political connections to Zhao Zhang's faction in the party. I thought of my new friend Wang and his Institute of History, known to be a hotbed of Zhao support.

"We will retain our critical role no matter who gets into power. It makes no difference for us if Zhao Zhang or Li Peng is in power, our role remains the same," said Professor Li.

Professor Fang also expressed deep sympathy for the non-student participants who had been arrested, apparently referring to the three union activists from the Beijing Autonomous Workers Federation.

The Party was taking off its gloves and denouncing the Goddess of Democracy and Freedom. That the Goddess had struck a nerve in the Party's senior leaders could not be camouflaged.

"Immediately restore the solemn face of Tiananmen Square," commanded the Beijing Daily. "Do not poke fun at China's patriotic feelings."

The Communist Party's principal mouthpiece, the People's Daily, devoted its editorial to an attack on the ongoing student occupation of Tiananmen. It said that the central plaza belonged to all Chinese and the people had "lost their right to use it." The encampment was described as an "oppression," and the paper warned students to go back to their classes and return to "democratic, normal, and legal" avenues of protest. "All students who sincerely want to promote democratization and the struggle against corruption can put their proposals at will to the National People's Congress through normal channels."

China Daily, the English-language version of the People's Daily, communicated similar sentiments. It printed excerpts of a statement from the Beijing Tiananmen Square Administration that was broadcast on CCTV and the Central Radio evening news. It called the placement of a mock Statue of Liberty in Tiananmen Square "an insult to this solemn site of national celebrations and State ceremonies," and demanded the removal of the "illegal statue," which, it stated, was occupying "the position reserved for a portrait of Dr. Sun Yat Sen" during the upcoming 40th National Anniversary celebrations.

The Daily also quoted a local architect who urged the Beijing municipal government to take "firm action" against the Goddess of Democracy and Freedom. "The square is the place for commemorating only the heroes of the People's Republic."

Another facet of the Party's counterattack was the placement of posters criticizing "bourgeois liberalization" around the city, including outside the major tourist hotels. Guests at the Minzu witnessed this first-hand. I noticed that the young men who worked on my floor were unusually agitated on Thursday. They spoke no English, and even if they did, hotel workers were less than eager to talk with foreigners for fear of being spotted by any undercover agents milling about.

I discovered later that day the source of their agitation. The government had ordered the hotel to hang one of those banners condemning "bourgeois liberalization" from the front of the large building, and the staff was none too happy about it. It was no secret where their sentiments lay.

The hotel staff was not alone. A Hong Kong Standard article by Tammy Tam revealed that a growing number of Chinese Communist Party members had resigned in protest against the Central Committee's crackdown on the pro-democracy demonstrations, as well as 100 teachers at Beijing University. I wondered if these 100 individuals were the ones Professor Bai was referring to when he said 100 intellectuals were poised to begin another hunger strike.

Wang Peigong, a playwright at the Beijing Youth Arts Academy, was one of the resignees. "The party is going further away from the people. I just cannot keep in line with such a party," said Mr. Wang, who quit the party after hearing Li Peng's May 19th speech that accused the students of causing turmoil. Mr. Wang wrote a long letter explaining his decision on May 23rd and gave it to his working unit's party committee.

"I'm a party member with 24-year membership. I have worked very hard in order to be accepted by the party which I have loved and trusted so much. I wrote my application for joining the party when I was only 16 years old when I was still a soldier in the air force in Hubei. I was only accepted by the party four years later. But now I've made such a contradictory decision. Why? Because I think the nature of the party is changing, it is separating itself from the people. And I cannot understand many things in the party. How can the party's general secretary become a head of the antipart clique?" Wang asked, referring to Zhao Zhang.

"The party had a bright period when it really represented the interests of the people and was really trusted and supported by people. But it has made a series of serious mistakes in the past years, and what makes me most disappointed is that it still believes itself to be representing the interests of people when it is turning to oppose their interests. What makes it more ridiculous is that some leaders within our party still use force to obtain unity in the way people think."

Mr. Wang went on to say that party members who agreed to support the party line were forced to repudiate their position when party leaders reversed their stand. He disliked having to repudiate his views, and said he felt "helpless to change the bad habits within our party as a common party member." Wang said party leaders "should thoroughly consider why more and more people ask to quit the party."

Mr. He Xilin, a teacher in the Central Academy of Fine Arts, quit the party because he was disillusioned with the political system.

"Quitting the party does not mean that I oppose the party. I still hope it can make progress and believe that there are many excellent members in the party," said Mr. He, who was one of the teachers who had joined the students? hunger strike in mid-May. "I was so disappointed and sad that the government just turned a blind eye to the hunger strikers and I made the decision on May 17th, the fourth day of the hunger strike, when the party and government leaders still could not come out to talk to the students."

Out of the remaining four articles on page 10 of the Hong Kong Standard, there was an even split. Two articles pointed to the continuing strength of the pro-democracy movement and Zhao Zhang's reformist faction in the Communist Party. The other two, however, contained ominous portents of what lay ahead.

The good news was that a just-published book on Zhao was selling faster than bookstores could keep up with. Despite recurring rumors that Zhao had lost the power struggle to Deng and Li and was under house arrest, and that he hadn't been heard from since his tearful visit to the hunger-striking students in Tiananmen Square on May 19th, Zhao was still popular in the capital. It was well known that he was the only Politburo member who had opposed martial law and openly advocated a dialogue with the students as the least costly way to end the crisis, and no one had forgotten his characterization of the student demonstrations as patriotic in a May 4th speech.

The other hopeful sign was that the organizer of a signature campaign which called for an emergency meeting of the National People's Congress Standing Committee revealed that 57 Standing Committee members had signed the petition. This was the same congress meeting that Wang had been counting so much on, and now I understood why. Wang worked in the Institute of History at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, known to be a strong base of support for Zhao Zhang. The organizer of the petition was none other than Cao Siyuan, director of the Research Institute of Social Development under the Stone Computer Company, a private think tank that was also extremely close to Zhao.

Cao said the campaign was designed to reflect public opinion on the political unrest in Beijing, and that it was in accordance with the constitution. He said that those Standing Committee members who had denied signing the petition were not telling the truth. Cao responded to charges in the People's Daily that there were ulterior motives underlying Stone's participation in the campaign.

"This is the first step of the authorities to attack participants in the ongoing pro-democracy movement. They tried to put pressure on Stone by laying groundless charges against us. We won't be scared by the warnings and we will try to strengthen the position by insisting on the campaign," he said.

Cao went on to say that the Stone Company might take legal action against the People's Daily and China Central Television for their false accusations of ulterior motives.

"We acted in the capacity of Chinese citizens and we just exercised our rights to call on our representatives in the parliament to reflect the people's views in the meeting. What's wrong with such actions?" he wanted to know. Cao said that the Stone Institute was thinking of waging another signature campaign which would call for an emergency meeting of the entire National People's Congress after the Standing Committee met on June 20th.

"The National People's Congress is the actual highest power organ of the state and it has the power to override the decision of the Standing Committee," he stated. Cao said that 600 NPC signatures would have to be collected in order to convene the NPC. He said the Stone Company was not afraid of any punishment the authorities may attempt to inflict, saying the institute would fight the government in the courts.

Mr. Cao was not seeing the handwriting on Beijing's walls. And he apparently hadn't read the other two articles on page 10 of the Hong Kong Standard. One article reported that Chinese ministers were again taking part in normal diplomatic and public activities--a sign that the power struggle was over and the government was regaining its unity and stability. Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen had just left Beijing for a tour of Ecuador, Cuba and the United States, where he was schedule to meet US Secretary of State James Baker. It was Mr. Qian's first trip overseas since the student demonstrations began in mid-April. Since martial law's imposition two weeks earlier, Chinese diplomats had rarely appeared at diplomatic or public occasions, and had even refused invitations by foreign embassies.

The other article was even more telling. Two high ranking generals in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) thought to have been purged were mentioned in the People's Daily, indicating that the military was unified. The Daily reported that General Hong Huezhi, deputy secretary general of the Party's Central Military Commission, which Deng Xiaoping headed, had visited troops outside Beijing earlier in the week. He was quoted as telling them they should appreciate the importance of martial law and make greater efforts to "guarantee the security of the capital and curb turmoil."

The Liberation Army Daily, mouthpiece of the PLA, said General Qin Jiwei, China's Defense Minister, had sent a wreath to the funeral of an air force officer on May 20th, the day martial law was imposed.

Rumors had been circulating in the capital that the two generals were members of the "anti-party" clique led by Zhao, and had been accused by hard-liners of not having done enough to suppress the student protests when they began in mid-April. The fact that they were back in favor with the People's Daily indicated they had survived the power struggle.

The three photographs on that same page 10 were additional signs that the hardwires were on the march. One showed a group of policemen chanting slogans in Huairou, a town 50 kilometers northeast of Beijing, during another pro-government demonstration. Another pictured several patriotic PLA soldiers cleaning streets near Tiananmen Square, picking up the mess left by the "troublemakers." The third photo showed workers removing anti-government posters from a wall of the Forbidden City.

The authorities were forced to relocated the Children's Day ceremonies from Tiananmen to an other location. For their part, as Wang promised, the students had their own Children's Day festivities in the square, a joyous occasion complete with dancing and signing. Children brought ice cream cones, toy stuffed animals and money for the students, who signed autographs with messages such as "When you go to college, may you never have to endure the hardship of a hunger strike."

But there were even more overt indications of escalating tensions in the city on Thursday. Reports were circulating of increased army movement outside Beijing, while the government was stepping up its martial law warnings to the press prohibiting any coverage of the demonstrations. More than a dozen military motorcycles with sidecars, followed by jeeps, sped down the major streets of Beijing. The government was flexing its muscles. Deng Xiaoping had seen enough.

By late Thursday night I felt much better, so I spent it writing an article for the San Francisco Examiner. I didn't finish it until almost 2 am, when I hopped on my bike and raced down Changan to the Beijing Hotel and its fax facilities. Amazingly, the people in the fax office acted like they couldn't care less about the content of my fax or its whereabouts. The young man and woman were very friendly and cooperative, and if they had any orders to censor outgoing faxes, they weren't following them. This was one more illustration of the paralysis afflicting the government since the outbreak of the Beijing Spring. Though the hard-liners were clearly consolidating their position, they still were not able to prohibit Western journalists from faxing home uncensored reports right under the government's nose.

**Chapter 7: Friday, June 2nd**

I received word early that the U.S. embassy had summoned all journalists for a brief at 10:30 am in the embassy building. Since I had faxed dispatches to the Examiner only hours before, I figured I qualified as a journalist for the purposes of the briefing.

My heart pounded as I pedaled furiously to the embassy under the already-broiling Beijing sun. For the first time since I'd arrived, I was experiencing fear. Surely the fact that the American embassy had contacted all journalists was related to the most recent government warnings to reporters to obey the martial law restrictions on covering the demonstrations. Troop movements were occurring outside the city, military motorcycles were speeding about Beijing's major arteries, dissident generals were back in the fold, and the government's warnings were sounding more ominous. Something was in the air.

No one checked for any press credentials at the entrance to the embassy. I went upstairs and walked into the crowded briefing room to find the meeting already in progress. Everyone was dutifully jotting down notes or running their tape recorders, hanging on every word of the three U.S. diplomats holding court. If there was an alarming situation going on outside, you never would have known it from the substance and tone of the American embassy officials.

"There has been no definitive leadership decision to crack down," said one diplomat authoritatively. "The game goes on. The government is looking for a solution that will save them face. Whatever emerges, probably won't hold. However the leadership is restructured, it will no doubt fall apart."

He referred to a pattern he had discerned in the Chinese press. "The People's Daily will report to the foreign press that no change has taken place. But in their press, there is no mention of Zhao, and they've stopped using titles when talking about the Military Commission."

"The leadership of the Chinese Communist Party operates like a secret society," chimed in another U.S. diplomat. "It runs on tight discipline. That's why Zhao Zhang got into trouble, for making individual decisions, like when he told Gorbachev that Deng was the guy in charge. That was the big no-no."

The third official went out of his way to downplay the significance of the students' erection of the controversial statue.

"The Beijing city government once erected statues of a panda and ox," he said with a straight face. "It isn't really that embarrassing. It is my opinion that the statue will remain in Tiananmen Square for a long time." So much for the sagacity and vision of the American diplomatic corps.

But then he said something that caught my attention, because it coincided almost word-for-word with what Wang had told me Wednesday night.

"The troops didn't arrive exclusively to deal with the students," said the diplomat. "It was also a power play that grew out of the factional infighting that has been going on."

The rest of the briefing produced little in the way of breakthrough developments, but I did get to hear incisive analysis from the American diplomats, such as the news that the Chinese leaders use of "goofy names" like "anti-bourgeois liberalization" was bad for the investment climate; and that Zhao Zhang was definitely out as General Secretary of the Party. But from there, the embassy official piously declared, they really could not say.

Through it all, I was struck by how both the U.S. press and diplomatic corps completely ignored the role of the students and workers in the mass mobilizations. The briefing was permeated by this snobbish, inner club, fraternity chumminess, where everyone was trying to impress everyone else with their knowledge of the inner machinations of the Communist Party bureaucracy.

You'd never know history was being made outside; you'd never suspect that a mass movement had enveloped the capital of the world's most populous nation. To these people, well trained in bourgeois thinking as they were, the focus was strictly on the individual personalities involved, the Deng Xaiopings and Li Pengs and Zhao Zhangs; the diplomats and journalists were totally mesmerized by the inner workings of the Chinese establishment. The heroes who made the Beijing Spring possible--the students and workers who had put their lives on the line in Tiananmen Square and elsewhere--were barely mentioned in all their smug theories and analyses. They were so alienated from and have such contempt for mass movements that they were not able to find it within themselves to include the pro-democracy campaign's prime movers in their briefing dialogue.

But then again, just as the U.S. government knew in advance about the Soviet Union's 1956 and 1968 invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia, maybe Washington was well aware that the Chinese government was on the verge of unleashing a brutal crackdown against the pro-democracy demonstrators. Maybe that was behind the diplomats' casual dismissal of a clamp-down. Maybe they weren't really as stupid as they seemed in hindsight; perhaps instead it was a dash of diplomatic deception.

Meanwhile, as the American embassy officials were triumphantly predicting a long reign for the Goddess of Democracy and Freedom, tensions continued to mount in Beijing, as 300 army soldiers were marching within a block of Tiananmen Square. The international press was reporting the details of the government's latest reiteration of the martial law restrictions on press coverage. A city spokesperson, Ding Weijun, told reporters that they were banned from covering "activities prohibited?" in Beijing, obviously including the Tiananmen demonstrations. Mr. Ding announced new rules which forbade "making appointments with Chinese citizens to meet at the offices or residences of foreign journalists," and "at hotels or elsewhere for interviews on activities prohibited by martial law decrees."

Wang and Liu certainly knew what they were doing in steering me away from the Beijing Hotel Wednesday night, but it dawned on me that everything I had been doing all week in the square violated martial law. Thinking back, I realized it was wise to keep moving whenever large crowds gathered around me with the tape recorder, especially with well-founded rumors of undercover agents throughout the square.

Western correspondents and television networks vowed to continue their coverage of the protests, despite the fact that Mr. Ding's statement included a ban on photographs and videotapes of military troops. Actually, before this week, most journalists were not having any more trouble covering the demonstrations than I was. But things were changing. Two U.S. television networks and a Japanese network were warned by the government that their crews were violating the martial law restrictions. Then, reporters from the Japanese daily Yomiuri Shimbun and the BBC were summoned to hear the same admonition.

The Herald Tribune reported that an other pro-government rally was staged on Thursday in a village north of Beijing. Workers and farmers were again ordered by local party officials to show up at the event and chant slogans of support for Prime Minister Li Peng, but this time they were drowned out by hundreds of students shouting for Li's resignation. I was heartened by this additional evidence that refuted the Tribune's headline earlier in the week: "Tired Students Wilting Under Li's Pressure."

I met Wang, Liu and Yang at our designated rendezvous point at five o'clock. From there we headed to Liu and his wife 's arts and stamps store in Beijing's free market. The trio was buoyed by two recent developments--the news that the authorities had bended to public pressure and released the three activists from the Beijing Autonomous Workers Federation, and the commencement of another hunger strike in Tiananmen Square. Professor Bai's information turned out to be accurate after all, although his prediction of 100 participants was somewhat inflated. Wang was especially excited about the hunger strike for one of the participants was a close friend of his--36-year-old Taiwanese singer Hou Dejian. Mr. Hou was joined by three prominent intellectuals--Liu Xiaopo, lecturer at Beijing Normal University and a Doctor of literature; Zhou Tuo, a lecturer from the Institute of Sociology at Beijing University, with connections to the Stone Company; and Gao Xin, former editor of Beijing Normal University Gazette and member of the Communist Party.

The bad news was that Liu had not brought along the agreement he had negotiated with the army during the people's blockade of the troops on May 23rd. The good news was that Wang had procured an excerpt of the June 2nd Hunger Strikers Declaration, which had been translated into English. It read:

"We are going on hunger strike! We want to protest and call for support from the people.

"We are not seeking our own extinction. We want to live as real people.

"Under the tyranny of martial law imposed unreasonably on us, we Chinese intellectuals must change our tradition of being all talk and no action by law. We don't want to promote the democratization process by peaceful means. We are against all kinds of force. But we are not afraid of force. We are using peaceful means to show the people's strength and solidity, to smash the rule of bayonets and falsehood.

"We protest against the lack of freedom of the press, against the martial law imposed on our press media. The people must have freedom of the press. We appeal to the people to gradually eliminate all feelings of hatred and give up the political propaganda of 'class struggle.' Let us bring about democracy with a spirit of tolerance and cooperation. Li Peng has committed serious mistakes and must resign from his post as premier. However, if he can do so we need not consider him our enemy. He can still live as an ordinary citizen.

"We should all abandon the attitude of onlookers. We are all equal. We should all have the responsibility of participating in state affairs. This is the duty of every citizen.

"What we want is not a heaven-sent saver, but a better political system. Absolute power in the hands of one man is unacceptable.

"We should all criticize ourselves. We have all made mistakes. Democracy as a political system is still new to us. We should all study democracy, this includes everybody.

"We must correct our past weakness and mistakes. We are all responsible for the backwardness of our nation.

"Through our hunger strike, we want also to tell the people that what the government media refers to as a small bunch of troublemakers is in fact the whole nation. We may not be students, but we are citizens whose sense of duty makes us support the democracy movements started by the college students. All we have been doing is within the boundaries of law.

"Our basic slogans:

"1. We are not against anybody. Do not let hatred and violence poison our fight for democracy.

"2. We are all responsible for our own past backwardness.

"3. We are Chinese citizens.

"4. We are not seeking death, but a real and better life.

"The time and place:

"1. The place is under the martyrs? memorial in Tiananmen Square.

"2. Seventy two hours starting from 4 pm, June 2nd to 4 pm June 5th. (Since Hou Dejian has to go to Hong Kong to make his recordings, he will only carry on for forty eight hours.)

"3. We will only drink water, we will not accept food or other forms of nourishment like sugar, starch, fat, glucose, etc."

Wang, Yang and Liu were bursting with pride over the hunger strikers and their moving declaration. Wang was particularly proud because of his relationship with Hou Dejian. He told me that Hou had defected from Taiwan several years earlier and had been living in the People 's Republic, so he was no flaming reactionary. Wang said that Hou had written a song recently called "Beautiful Chinese," which contained the lyric: "We ugly Chinese, how beautiful we are today."

This use of sarcasm was evident in Tiananmen Square on Friday. Wang chuckled when he told me he had seen students wearing demon masks and Chiang Kai-shek costumes while chanting derisively "Support martial law, down with democracy, support oppression." Others carried a banner reading "Support Li Peng, earn 10 yuan ($20), the amount workers and farmers allegedly received for attending the pro-government rallies.

After a 20-minute walk through Beijing's hot, dusty streets, we arrived at Liu's shop in the free market. Liu's attractive wife was working the store, and when introduced she greeted me with a warm, friendly smile. She could not hide her concern for her husband's safety, however. Her voice was laced with urgency as she told Liu to come home early that evening.

It turned out that Liu and his wife owned not one but four shops in the free market district. The young man was quite the successful entrepreneur, and for this was constantly teased by his less affluent friends, especially Yang, who was apparently struggling as a photo journalist. Liu was also not above trying to impress his American friend with his prosperity.

"The next time you come to China, you can stay in one of my apartments. For nothing. Nice, modern apartment, not like Yang's," he said with a smile. Not even a solid revolutionary democrat was immune from the effects of Deng's embracement of free enterprise. Class differentiations were finding their expression even among close friends. Indeed, some things are the same the world over.

After kissing his wife and assuring her he'd be home early, Liu and his friends took me to a crowded restaurant off the Avenue of Eternal Peace, a half mile from Tiananmen. The place was jumping with the news that earlier in the day, the Party had sent hundreds of unarmed troops jogging into Tiananmen Square in an attempt to intimidate the student demonstrators. The mission failed as the students, taking advantage of their numerical superiority and the fact that the soldiers were not armed, repulsed the invaders and even mocked them as they retreated.

We enjoyed another stellar Chinese dinner while Yang and Liu got good and drunk. The latter did his best to land me in the same condition. Liu thoroughly enjoyed drinking with his new American friend, but I was able to get away with nursing three or four great-tasting Chinese beers. Wang was anxious to take me to Tiananmen to visit his famous hunger-striking friend.

"I'll arrange for you to meet my friend Hou Dejian. I'll get you inside the tent he is staying in," he said confidently.

It was nine o'clock before we left the restaurant and headed for the square. The Avenue of Eternal Peace was already simmering with electricity. The bicycle and pedestrian brigade was streaming toward Tiananmen. It seemed as if the entire city was turning out Friday night to show support for the four newest hunger strikers, and in doing so were sending a message to Deng Xiaoping: If the army was sent in to forcibly clear the square, there would be an international price to pay for it.

I followed Wang, Liu and Yang through a filled to capacity Tiananmen, passing the tent city below the Goddess of Democracy and Freedom and on to the Monument of the People's Heroes, still the command center of the student movement. As we approached the tents housing the hunger striker, we were met by several layers of highly agitated, disciplined security marshals. Between Liu's authority as a square commander and Wang's connections to Hou Deijian, we made it all the way to the hunger strikers' tent.

Here our paths were abruptly stopped by three marshals who were taking their jobs very seriously. Wang spoke first, all excited and animated, obviously telling security that he was a close friend of Hou who was bringing an American journalist to interview him. Security was not impressed. They were not letting anyone inside. There was much tension in the air, and the marshals guarding the hunger strikers reflected it. Wang argued vociferously that they let us in to see Hou, but the marshals would have none of it. Then Liu took over in his belligerent, drunken manner, an approach which did not go over well with security. Tempers flared and it looked like Liu and one of the monitors were going to go at it, but they were pulled apart before anything physical ensued. Wang was frustrated, Liu was enraged, and Yang was poised to attack anyone who laid a hand on Liu.

I stepped back from the fray and sat down a minute to catch my breath. The situation seemed chaotic on the surface, but the discipline and organization was strong enough to just barely keep things together. There must have been a quarter of a million people in Tiananmen. If the government had thrown down the gauntlet with the introduction of troops jogging into the square and the deployment of military motorcycles, the people of Beijing were responding by marching into the square to show their solidarity with the students and the hunger strikers. The game of chicken was coming to an end.

After several minutes, Wang came over to me and sat down.

"My friend Hou Deijian is sleeping now. They do not want us to disturb him now. They will not let us in. I tried everything. I am sorry. As you can see, the situation up here is chaos."

Indeed, a squad of marshals were struggling to prevent the pushing and shoving crowd from breaking through and entering the tent. We were not the only ones desiring to see the celebrity hunger strikers.

Wang and I talked for a little while, then bade each other good night, but not before making plans to meet for another dinner on Sunday night. Wang promised that he the would have the copy of Liu's May 23rd pledge from the army. Yang and Liu were off to the side, the former nursing his friend's drunken, wounded ego. He could not look his American friend in the eye, for his authority as square commander had been challenged. I wanted to tell him it didn't matter at all, but now wasn't the time, and I knew he'd be over it in the morning. I looked at them one more time before making my way back to the Minzu. I would not see them again.

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The Herald Tribune reported that an other pro-government rally was staged on Thursday in a village north of Beijing. Workers and farmers were again ordered by local party officials to show up at the event and chant slogans of support for Prime Minister Li Peng, but this time they were drowned out by hundreds of students shouting for Li’s resignation. I was heartened by this additional evidence that refuted the Tribune’s headline earlier in the week: “Tired Students Wilting Under Li’s Pressure.”

I met Wang, Liu and Yang at our designated rendevouz point at five o’clock. From there we headed to Liu and his wife’s arts and stamps store in Beijing’s free market. The trio was buoyed by two recent developments—the news that the authorities had bended to public pressure and released the three activists from the Beijing Autonomous Workers Federation, and the commencement of another hunger strike in Tiananmen Square. Professor Bai’s information turned out to be accurate after all, although his prediction of 100 participants was somewhat inflated. Wang was especially excited about the hunger strike for one of the participants was a close friend of his—36-year-old Taiwanese singer Hou Dejian. Mr. Hou was joined by three prominent intellectuals—Liu Xiaopo, lecturer at Beijing Normal University and a Doctor of literature; Zhou Tuo, a lecturer from the Institute of Sociology at Beijing University, with connections to the Stone Company; and Gao Xin, former editor of Beijing Normal University Gazette and member of the Communist Party.

The bad news was that Liu had not brought along the agreement he had negotiated with the army during the people’s blockade of the troops on May 23rd. The good news was that Wang had procured an excerpt of the June 2nd Hunger Strikers Declaration, which had been translated into English. It read:

"We are going on hunger strike! We want to protest and call for support from the people.

"We are not seeking our own extinction. We want to live as real people.

"Under the tyranny of martial law imposed unreasonably on us, we Chinese intellectuals must change our tradition of being all talk and no action by law. We don’t want to promote the democratisation process by peaceful means. We are against all kinds of force. But we are not afraid of force. We are using peaceful means to show the people’s strength and solidity, to smash the rule of bayonets and falsehood.

"We protest against the lack of freedom of the press, against the martial law imposed on our press media. The people must have freedom of the press. We appeal to the people to gradually eliminate all feelings of hatred and give up the political propaganda of 'class struggle.' Let us bring about democracy with a spirit of tolerance and cooperation. Li Peng has committed serious mistakes and must resign from his post as premier. However, if he can do so we need not consider him our enemy. He can still live as an ordinary citizen.

"We should all abandon the attitude of onlookers. We are all equal. We should all have the responsibility of participating in state affairs. This is the duty of every citizen.

"What we want is not a heaven-sent saver, but a better political system. Absolute power in the hands of one man is unacceptable.

"We should all criticize ourselves. We have all made mistakes. Democracy as a political system is still new to us. We should all study democracy, this includes everybody.

"We must correct our past weakness and mistakes. We are all responsible for the backwardness of our nation.

"Through our hunger strike, we want also to tell the people that what the government media refers to as a small bunch of troublemakers is in fact the whole nation. We may not be students, but we are citizens whose sense of duty makes us support the democracy movements started by the college students. All we have been doing is within the boundaries of law.

"Our basic slogans:

"1. We are not against anybody. Do not let hatred and violence poison our fight for democracy.

"2. We are all responsible for our own past backwardness.

"3. We are Chinese citizens.

"4. We are not seeking death, but a real and better life.

"The time and place:

"1. The place is under the martyrs’ memorial in Tiananmen Square.

"2. Seventy two hours starting from 4 pm, June 2nd to 4 pm June 5th. (Since Hou Dejian has to go to Hong Kong to make his recordings, he will only carry on for forty eight hours.)

"3. We will only drink water, we will not accept food or other forms of nourishment like sugar, starch, fat, glucose, etc."

Wang, Yang and Liu were bursting with pride over the hunger strikers and their moving declaration. Wang was particularly proud because of his relationship with Hou Dejian. He told me that Hou had defected from Taiwan several years earlier and had been living in the People’s Republic, so he was no flaming reactionary. Wang said that Hou had written a song recently called “Beautiful Chinese,” which contained the lyric: “We ugly Chinese, how beautiful we are today.”

This use of sarcasm was evident in Tiananmen Square on Friday. Wang chuckled when he told me he had seen students wearing demon masks and Chiang Kai-shek costumes while chanting derisively “Support martial law, down with democracy, support oppression.” Others carried a banner reading “Support Li Peng, earn 10 yuan ($20), the amount workers and farmers allegedly received for attending the pro-government rallies.

After a 20-minute walk through Beijing’s hot, dusty streets, we arrived at Liu’s shop in the free market. Liu’s attractive wife was working the store, and when introduced she greeted me with a warm, friendly smile. She could not hide her concern for her husband’s safety, however. Her voice was laced with urgency as she told Liu to come home early that evening.

It turned out that Liu and his wife owned not one but four shops in the free market district. The young man was quite the successful entrepreneur, and for this was constantly teased by his less affluent friends, especially Yang, who was apparently struggling as a photojournalist. Liu was also not above trying to impress his American friend with his prosperity.

“The next time you come to China, you can stay in one of my apartments. For nothing. Nice, modern apartment, not like Yang’s,” he said with a smile. Not even a solid revolutionary democrat was immune from the effects of Deng’s embracement of free enterprise. Class differentiations were finding their expression even among close friends. Indeed, some things are the same the world over.

After kissing his wife and assuring her he’d be home early, Liu and his friends took me to a crowded restaurant off the Avenue of Eternal Peace, a half mile from Tiananmen. The place was jumping with the news that earlier in the day, the Party had sent hundreds of unarmed troops jogging into Tiananmen Square in an attempt to intimidate the student demonstrators. The mission failed as the students, taking advantage of their numerical superiority and the fact that the soldiers were not armed, repulsed the invaders and even mocked them as they retreated.

We enjoyed another stellar Chinese dinner while Yang and Liu got good and drunk. The latter did his best to land me in the same condition. Liu thoroughly enjoyed drinking with his new American friend, but I was able to get away with nursing three or four great-tasting Chinese beers. Wang was anxious to take me to Tiananmen to visit his famous hunger-striking friend.

“I’ll arrange for you to meet my friend Hou Dejian. I’ll get you inside the tent he is staying in,” he said confidently.

It was nine o’clock before we left the restaurant and headed for the square. The Avenue of Eternal Peace was already simmering with electricity. The bicycle and pedestrian brigade was streaming toward Tiananmen. It seemed as if the entire city was turning out Friday night to show support for the four newest hunger strikers, and in doing so were sending a message to Deng Xiaoping: If the army was sent in to forcibly clear the square, there would be an international price to pay for it.

I followed Wang, Liu and Yang through a filled to capacity Tiananmen, passing the tent city below the Goddess of Democracy and Freedom and on to the Monument of the People’s Heroes, still the command center of the student movement. As we approached the tents housing the hunger striker, we were met by several layers of highly agitated, disciplined security marshals. Between Liu’s authority as a square commander and Wang’s connections to Hou Deijian, we made it all the way to the hunger strikers’ tent.

Here our paths were abruptly stopped by three marshals who were taking their jobs very seriously. Wang spoke first, all excited and animated, obviously telling security that he was a close friend of Hou who was bringing an American journalist to interview him. Security was not impressed. They were not letting anyone inside. There was much tension in the air, and the marshals guarding the hunger strikers reflected it. Wang argued vociferously that they let us in to see Hou, but the marshals would have none of it. Then Liu took over in his belligerent, drunken manner, an approach which did not go over well with security. Tempers flared and it looked like Liu and one of the monitors were going to go at it, but they were pulled apart before anything physical ensued. Wang was frustrated, Liu was enraged, and Yang was poised to attack anyone who laid a hand on Liu.

I stepped back from the fray and sat down a minute to catch my breath. The situation seemed chaotic on the surface, but the discipline and organization was strong enough to just barely keep things together. There must have been a quarter of a million people in Tiananmen. If the government had thrown down the gauntlet with the introduction of troops jogging into the square and the deployment of military motorcycles, the people of Beijing were responding by marching into the square to show their solidarity with the students and the hunger strikers. The game of chicken was coming to an end.

After several minutes, Wang came over to me and sat down.

“My friend Hou Deijian is sleeping now. They do not want us to disturb him now. They will not let us in. I tried everything. I am sorry. As you can see, the situation up here is chaos.”

Indeed, a squad of marshals were struggling to prevent the pushing and shoving crowd from breaking through and entering the tent. We were not the only ones desiring to see the celebrity hunger strikers.

Wang and I talked for a little while, then bade each other good night, but not before making plans to meet for another dinner on Sunday night. Wang promised tha the would have the copy of Liu’s May 23rd pledge from the army. Yang and Liu were off to the side, the former nursing his friend’s drunken, wounded ego. He could not look his American friend in the eye, for his authority as square commander had been challenged. I wanted to tell him it didn’t matter at all, but now wasn’t the time, and I knew he’d be over it in the morning. I looked at them one more time before making my way back to the Minzu. I would not see them again.

**Chapter 8: Saturday, June 3rd**

I got an early start in order to read the newspaper accounts of the rapidly escalating events. This was necessary because today was the day I was going to the Great Wall with Mr. Xing from the TV Ministry. Though I truly wanted to visit the famous Chinese tourist attraction while in Beijing, I was not thrilled at the prospect of leaving the capital on this particular day, when things seemed to be headed for a showdown. But I had no choice in the matter; my associate told me that Mr. Xing had been planning this outing since Wednesday, and it is a commitment that must be fulfilled. The thought crossed my mind that Mr. Xing, as a representative of the Chinese government, had known by Wednesday that Saturday was the day of the army deployment into the square, and he had decided to get me out of the city and away from trouble.

It appeared that the Hong Kong Standard was doing its best to give credence to the government's offensive against the protesters. An article entitled "Elitism and Privilege back in Tiananmen" reported that the top echelon of the student leadership on the square was racked with corruption. It said that the central leaders were helping themselves to the millions of donated dollars arriving from Hong Kong and elsewhere, living like royalty, checking into luxurious hotels, and fancying themselves as heroes.

Students were complaining that their leaders were isolating themselves and had constructed their own version of a privileged bureaucracy. Rank and file students were not able to talk directly to the leaders, who had bodyguards to buffer them from the masses. Students from the outer provinces charged that the Beijing students looked down on them and had attempted to exclude them from the central leadership.

"Ordinary students are barred from meeting them or getting close to the Monument of People's Heroes. Only people having special entry permits issued by the leaders are granted the rights of entry to the monument," said a student from Beijing Normal University.

A student from Hong Kong charged that resources had been unfairly distributed throughout Tiananmen.

"For example, the student leaders on the square are given the best food and drink. The food and daily necessities distributed to the monitors are also better than those given to the ordinary students. The treatment of Beijing students is superior to those coming from outside Beijing. When you walk into the centre of the square, you will find big slumps of unconsumed packets of drink, bread and biscuits while the students staying at the periphery of the square are starving," he said.

There were other, less serious charges levied against the student leadership. Certain prominent students had allegedly switched their dirty white shirts for imported Western suits for the press conferences; others were smoking coveted American cigarettes like Marlboro, Kent and Salem instead of China-made cigarettes, and traveling around in taxicabs instead of bicycles.

It's not that there was no validity to some of these charges, for I had directly experienced the extremely tight, bordering on paranoia security surrounding the Monument of People's Heroes. Only my connections to Professor Bai and later Wang and Liu enabled me to get as far as I did, but even then it was not without some trouble. And Wang had showed me a photograph of Liu's martial-arts toting bodyguard from Tiananmen Square. No political leadership is flawless, especially when the "leaders" are college students. We are all children of our times, and the fact that these students reflected some of the shortcoming of the very governmental leaders they were criticizing is not particularly shocking. But the timing and tone of the Standard article dovetailed all too snugly ugly with the Party's propaganda offensive against the students, with its critical dissection of the students' behavior the day after troops were jogging into Tiananmen.

Another ominous sign was the report in the Beijing Daily that China's official trade union federation had asked the government to ban the BAWF. In a "solemn call" to the government, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) declared the independent union "illegal." The paper said the party leadership in Beijing had branded the new union as counterrevolutionary before arresting three of its leaders earlier in the week. The official union accused BAWF of spreading rumors, inciting the overthrow of the government, making illegal calls for strikes, infiltrating security bodies and trying to divide the working class. An official from the ACFTU condemned BAWF for attempting to be "completely independent" and called for "vigorous measures for its immediate ban."

More conflicting signs. On the one hand, the government bent to public pressure and released the three union militants after workers and students nearly stormed the Ministry of State Security. On the other hand, the Communist Party-dominated ACFTU was openly advocating the banning of BAWF.

At 9 am, Mr. Xing arrived at the Minzu Hotel with the same taxicab driver who had chauffeured us around all week. He announced that we were going to the most recently restored section of the Wall.

"It will take a little longer to get to, perhaps an hour and a half. But it will be worth it. It's the best part of the Wall."

Before we left Beijing, Mr. Xing turned to me and said, "Oh. There's been an accident in the city. A military jeep ran over some pedestrians. One person was killed. The people are very angry."

I'll bet they are, I thought to myself. This was it. The day all hell was going to break loose, and I'm going sightseeing at the Great Wall with Mr. Xing. And we're taking the long route there. I knew it; Xing had known since Wednesday that Saturday was crackdown day, and whether he did it on his own or on orders from his superiors, he didn't want me around for the fireworks.

We took a nice, long, leisurely drive of just under two hours to the Great Wall, passing through the rural countryside that surrounds Beijing. The farms we passed were small, inhabited by hard working farmers and their families using simple implements and mules; they didn't look like the layer of prosperous farmers who had benefited most from Deng's pro-market policies. They looked more like the poorer farmers who were suffering from the deleterious effects of the high prices they were paying and the low prices they were receiving for their goods.

When we finally arrived at the Wall, Mr. Xing and I took a sky lift up the tree-filled valley to our point of destination. The Great Wall is more like a Great Fort, with an imposing, castle-like appearance. It is an impressive structure, over 3,000 miles long, built to keep out invading enemies by the early dynasties. Mr. Xing was so intent on keeping me away from Beijing as long as possible that he even wanted to take me to unchartered areas. Then, he made me sit through a prolonged lunch hour at the Wall restaurant. On the way out, I was besieged by a multitude of bitterly competitive merchants hawking their souvenirs. There were only a few other tourists that day; I had the feeling that they hadn't been doing much business since the Tiananmen demonstrations. I broke down and bought a blue Chairman Mao cap with the red star, my Trotskyist heritage notwithstanding.

By the time we got back to Beijing it was nearly 2 pm, and the city was rocking. Changan Avenue was even more crowded than usual, and the destination of the throngs was Tiananmen Square. Mr. Xing did his best to delay me as long as he possibly could; he made an excuse to come up to my room for something. Finally he left, and not a minute too soon. I grabbed my tape recorder, and minutes later I was walking my bike up Changan toward the square. Panic gripped the streets; I knew Mr. Xing had succeeded in keeping me away from some kind of action.

I hadn't taken three steps toward Tiananmen Square when a gasping man stumbled in my path and said that shots had been fired in Tiananmen about an hour ago.

"Rubber bullets," he managed. "Some injuries. They used belts and tear gas."

Huge crowds seemed to be running in all directions on Changan, bringing chaos everywhere. This was no place for a bicycle, so I ditched it at the nearest bike rack and continued on foot.

Suddenly, I noticed a procession of bicycles clearing a path for a badly injured demonstrator whose face was covered with blood. Then a man staggered up to me and announced he had been knocked to the ground by the police, and he pointed to his scraped knee as evidence.

"The police, the police," he kept repeating.

I found myself rambling into the tape recorder.

"The signs were coming yesterday. The stepped up warnings from the government to the press, prohibiting them from covering any demonstrations, talking to anybody. The embassy brief, the reports of some presence of military in the square and streets."

When I came to the first intersection between the Minzu and Tiananmen, I realized the magnitude of what Mr. Xing had prevented me from witnessing. Two municipal buses, each filled with demonstrators, were blocking the intersection, every single window smashed, with broken glass everywhere. Changan and all of the side streets were packed with people and bicycles; the air was filled with tension and angry shouts. It was five o'clock and still boiling hot.

A man in his late thirties came up to me, looking at my tape recorder.

"Are you journalist?" he asked.

"Yes, from the United States. What happened earlier?"

"Today Deng sends in army. Troops coming in to clear Tiananmen. But the people met them and fought. One side. Troops coming from west down Changan."

"Was there resistance from the people?" I asked him.

"Some students and workers resisted," he replied. "But not much. But from east, people shouting 'go back, go back,' and the soldiers stopped. Soldiers very young. The people push pushed them, but soldiers don't fire. The people waved banners and shouted."

"Was there an accident this morning?" I asked the man, remembering Mr. Xing's story on the way to the Great Wall.

"Yes, yes, in the Muxude district [west of Tiananmen Square], a police jeep carrying soldiers ran into the people. One woman died. Three men were seriously hurt. The government says it was accident, but the people do not believe them. The people are very angry."

In a few minutes I was in front of the Zhonghanan party compound, scene of the bizarre confrontation that had summed up the relationship of forces in Beijing all week long. Today was no exception. The entire street was filled with over 1000 angry demonstrators, only this time they weren't squaring off with a half dozen yoga sitting unarmed soldiers. At least 100 armed, helmeted soldiers stood tensely in front of the compound. I was inching my way forward amidst an obstacle course of pedestrians and bicyclists. Someone had taken the banners reading "Serve the People" out of the mouths of the lions in front of Zhonghanan. One small yellow banner was left on one wall.

Just past the compound, two army trucks had been overturned and thoroughly vandalized. Suddenly I was worried about the fate of the Goddess in the square. I could hear a great deal of yelling coming from Tiananmen's direction. Had she survived the day's battles? Was she singing Elton John's song, "I'm Still Standing"?

As I approached the Great Hall of the People I could see several persons on top of the building looking down at the mobilization. Others were checking things out from inside their offices. There didn't seem to be an empty space anywhere on Changan Avenue or in the plaza bordering the Great Hall. I passed by two trashed army trucks on Changan. One truck was overturned, the other was upright. The hoods on each truck were ripped open, every window had been smashed and every tire slashed. There were no soldiers in immediate sight, but I had just missed the clash.

I came to a relative clearing, and a young man approached me. He told me about the rubber bullets and belts. I mentioned the bleeding man being carried by the bicyclists.

"On the street. On the back of the stretcher. Yes, I saw him."

I came upon a commandeered bus at the edge of Changan just before the Great Hall. Demonstrators were packed inside and perched on top, and all the windows had been broken. With the help of two young demonstrators I climbed to the roof of the bus to get a better view of the large mobilization bordering the Great Hall. From that point, I was able to see a large contingent of armed, helmeted soldiers surrounded by the large crowd of demonstrators. There were thousands in the plaza, and hundreds on top and inside of the two buses. Then a procession of marchers under a large red banner passed the bus and filed into the already jammed plaza.

A great roar of approval went up from the wildly applauding crowd. Someone told me that the banner belonged to the Beijing Autonomous Workers Federation. The independent union had gained public support with the arrest and subsequent release of its three members; its standing had clearly been bolstered in the public's eye. If Deng Xiaoping had not ordered the army to clear out the square when he saw that sign calling for his death, he surely was going to do it now.

The mood was very intense now. Student monitors strained to hold back the angry crowd by locking arms and holding hands; the crowd was clapping and the hemmed in soldiers weren't looking very pleased. It looked like they could charge any minute. I climbed down from the bus and made my way onto the plaza. People kept coming up to me asking, "Where are you from? Are you from America? Tell the truth about today."

One man told me, "This is the first time the Army has attacked the people in China's history."

The tension builds under a blazing hot Beijing sun

A sit-down vigil was taking place in front of a gate that leads into the Great Hall. On the other side of the gate, inside the complex, stood 100 soldiers menacingly brandishing belts in their hands.

One student said, “We are angry that we have to listen to the Voice of America broadcasts in order to receive news about our own country.” She was expressing a fierce nationalism, one that had been tarnished and embarrassed by the fact that its people, faced with lying from its government, were forced to rely on foreign press as a source of information.

Another student walked up and said, “The army was first to hit the people, the first to use violence. They used belts, rubber bullets and tear gas against the students in Tiananmen today. At 2 o’clock in the square, a middle aged woman shouted to the soldiers, ‘Don’t beat the people!’ Then they beat her brutally with a belt.”

He told me the students were yelling, “Down with Fascism!” to the soldiers inside the complex. “You must know that earlier today, the top student leaders were carrying banners into Tiananmen. You know, Wang Dan, Wuer Xaxi. Chai Ling came too, but other students led her away from the trouble.

By now, I was with the demonstrators at the gate leading into the complex. Many were students and workers, but the omnipresent transients are everywhere too. The soldiers were 10 feet away on the other side, still brandishing their belts. My tape recorder’s batteries had gone dead, but it still gave me away as a journalist, which gave me VIP status in the eyes of the protesters. One offered me a jug of water to drink. Under the broiling 5:30 sun, I graciously accepted.

Demonstrators confront the Army by the Great Hall of the People.

Now THIS looks like a Congress of the People!

Now the soldiers began moving toward the gate, pumping their truncheons in a threatening manner. Some demonstrators carried large sticks, but they appeared to be the rough transients, not students. “Hooligans” the Stalinists would have called them. Students were yelling “Dictatorship!” at the soldiers, who appeared to be receiving instructions of some kind.

One student talked about the necessity for a worker-student alliance. “The independent workers union is important, but the workers were not al lowed to join the new union. If they did, they would be expelled,” he said.

Another student handed me a tear gas canister. “Tell the world what our government has done,” he said. “In the morning, all of the office workers were at their jobs, but now they are getting off work and coming to the demonstrations.”

The soldiers now had daggers to go along with their belts. They stopped their forward motion, only four feet from the gate. They stared at us, and we stared back. Convinced they were about to charge, I braced myself for the assault. But they didn’t attack. Instead, the tense confrontation at the gate slowly, and inexplicably, diffused. Shouts and commotion were coming from a portion of the crowd not far away.

Suddenly another bloodied man was led away from the pushing and shoving. I walked 50 feet further toward the back of the plaza toward an incredible scene—a soldier saluting the crowd and saying, “We are the army of the people and we won’t fight the people.” Everyone around me was rhythmically clapping. The army had told the people they were only there for training. These must have been the soldiers from the 38th Division, an outfit based in the Beijing area, rumored to be a Zhao Zhang stronghold, and thus reluctant to follow Deng and Li’s hardline command.

Someone held up a white flag, but it was difficult to ascertain just who was surrendering to whom. Behind me, the steps leading up the Great Hall of the People were lined with thousands of demonstrators of all ages.

“Now this looks like a Congress of the People!” I remarked to no one in particular. Then, I had to rub my eyes to believe what I was witnessing. A soldier was leading the cheering crowd in the singing of the Internationale! Just 15 minutes earlier and 50 feet away, it looked like a sure bet that the belt-wielding, dagger-possessing soldiers were about to charge the crowd on the other side of the gate. Now, soldiers and demonstrtors were singing the international communist anthem under a white flag. A man told me that he had seen a soldier try to strike a reporter earlier.

The demonstrators applauded a banner showing China covered with blood, and continued to sing the Internationale and wave the V sign. It looked like Woodstock meeting the October Revolution. Then, in all the confusion, the soldiers appeared to be leaving the plaza, to the victorious cheers of the people.

Hours before the massacre, demonstrators sing "The Internationale" to soldiers from the 38th Division of the People's Liberation Army.

It was after six, my throat was parched, and the tape recorder needed new batteries. I decided to make a quick pit stop back at the Minzu. As I left the Congress of the People and began walking down the Old Beijing side streets that run parallel to Changan Avenue, a well-dressed, middle aged man walked up to me.

“Who are you?” he inquired.

“I’m an American. A tourist.”

What are you doing here?” he demanded.

“I’m just observing things. I support the people’s fight for democracy.”

Immediately I knew I shouldn’t have volunteered that information. He looked at me suspiciously, but I didn’t hang around to continue the discussion. I beat a retreat and made straight for the side streets, never looking back.

I cursed myself for the burst of honesty I had provided him. Why didn’t I just tell him I was a journalist, too? The guy was a dead ringer for an undercover agent. I had avoided them all week long on the square as I was violating the martial law regulations, but now it seemed they were catching up with me.

Paranoia struck me; suddenly the side streets of Old Beijing looked foreboding, so I quickly got back on the Avenue of Eternal Peace, which did not look eternally peaceful. The faceoff between the demonstrators and the armed troops at Zhonghanan continued, and both sides looked like they knew the game of chicken was almost over.

Back at the Minzu, the guys on the hotel staff looked very agitated. In an act of defiance, someone had pulled down the pro-government banner hanging from the building. I made my pit stop a brief one, loaded the tape recorder with fresh batteries, and headed back for Tiananmen Square.

It was five minutes before eight when I reached the intersection three blocks from the square. Another bus had been liberated, filled with people inside and a banner hanging from its rear. On top of the bus stood several young men. One had a bullhorn, another held a red banner. Perched ominously next to them were two rifles tied to some kind of lean-to. The bus was surrounded by thousands of citizens in the intersection and street, as tens of thousands more made for Tiananmen Square. I noticed a camera hanging from a lightpost at one of the intersections had been covered with cloth, like those in Tiananmen had been. All kinds of group meetings of various sizes were occurring throughout the city blocks between the hotel and the square. I passes still another liberated municipal bus that had all of its windows smashed.

For the second time that day I never made it to Tiananmen, because my attention was drawn to the large assemblies and commotion at the back of the Great Hall of the People. The “Congress of the People” had moved from the steps and relocated at the reat of the huge complex. There were hundreds of soldiers moving slowly away from the building, still surrounded by demonstrators. Suddenly, a loud roar emanated from the crowd; I wasn’t sure why. I turned on my tape recorder to get it all down.

“A scene is going on in the middle of all this. I see some news cameras, ABC, CNN, a few others. The crowd is chanting at the helmeted soldiers, armed with AK-47s. It looks like the soldiers are going into the compound, the courtyard of the Great Hall. They’re making their way slowly, going through the thick mass of protesters.”

The author's view from atop a commandeered bus during the standoff between demonstrators and the army by the Great Hall of the People, hours before the massacre.

Things seemed to be downshifting for the moment. My curiosity about the statue’s fate took over. I was overwhelmed by the desire to go to the square and see for myself if the Goddess was still standing. I reached the very back of the Great Hall to find things almost calm there. A man carrying a running water hose flashed me the V sign. As I approached Tiananmen from the north side, the pace picked up again. There were still tens of thousands demonstrators along with red and yellow banners blanketing the square, as well as those tightly concentrated tent cities around the Monument headquarters and . . .there was the Goddess, still standing and serene amidst all the turmoil around her.

It looked as if intense meetings were going on at each tent city. The students’ voices coming from the loudspeakers were strained and agitated. As the soldiers marched into the Great Hall of the People, a government spokesperson was warning the demonstrators to leave the square. I began speaking into the recorder again.

“The army may have tried to move in to the square today, but they certainly haven’t succeeded in clearing it out yet. I heard reports in the Hong Kong Standard that student leaders had warned civilians in the square to leave when the reports of the army approaching were first known. I have a feeling these are the kinds of meetings that I see going on at the tent cities surrounding the Monument and the Goddess. But the tents are here, the banners are all here, and a lot of people are still here.

“There’s a bus coming into the square now, with a red flag at the top, and there are people inside and on top of the bus. People are clapping as it is coming into the square. Now it is driving on the road between the Great Hall and Tiananmen. It is an amazing scene—people from the square are now running over to greet the liberated bus. It looks like a Pied Piper bus the way hundreds of people are running behind it, following wherever it goes. Everyone is clapping wildly as the demonstrators bang the roof of the bus loudly. The smell of burnt rubber hangs strong in the air from the flat tires of the commandeered bus.

“I’m passing the Tent City under the Monument; one of them is housing the four June 2nd hunger strikers. It seems as if the tents are more concentrated directly in the middle of the square. Each tent has banners on it, with flags on bamboo poles, or Chinese characters written on the sides of the tents.

“Now the bus is making a right hand turn; it looks like it’s headed for the area behind the Great Hall, scene of the earlier confrontation between the demonstrators and the army.”

I turned off my tape recorder and headed for the back of the Great Hall. A flat bed truck filled with demonstrators with a red flag hanging from the front was driving in the same direction. A group of chanting students passed in front of me. The mood was very tense. I noticed something across the street that injected a welcome note of levity into the grim atmosphere—a Kentucky Fried Chicken store with a sign in English reading, “Take Away.” A helicopter circled above us. Ambulances were screaming down the streets off Tiananmen Square, filling the air with sirens.

I reached the back of the Great Hall to find the brilliant white lights from the news cameras illuminating a huge crowd surrounding another large contingent of soldiers carrying AK-47s, looking rather nervous about it all. I couldn’t tell if it was fraternization or trouble ahead, though I leaned to the trouble side. Disciplined student monitors barely kept the pushing and shoving demonstrators from swarming the kneeling, sitting soldiers.

I inched my way to the point where I could have reached out and touched a Chinese soldier. Suddenly the crowd broke out in still another rendition of the Internationale, the most spirited one yet. I noticed the soldiers were not singing along this time. An officer stood up, shouting into a bullhorn, motioning the crowd to back up with his hands in the air. The protesters responded with chants and more pushing.

“It looks like a student is talking right now, standing right next to one of the officers; it’s kind of hard to hear his voice. The video cameras are on him now, and the people seem to be increasingly aware that he is speaking. He appears to be urging the crowd to settle down and back off, but the crowd continues chanting.

“We’ve got another liberated bus coming in here, with hundreds of demonstrators inside and atop it, waving the V sign; they seem genuinely pleased with the applause and shouts of approval from the people. The bus’s arrival is turning attention away from the troops on the part of many protesters here. The bus is slowly making its way through the dense crowd. Someone is saying something about tear gas being used earlier. The people inside the bus are all smiling and very happy; on top several demonstrators are armed with bats, poles and sticks. Now they’re letting a film guy climb up the side of the bus. They took his camera for him and are helping him up. Now they’ve given him back his camera and are motioning for him to shoot away. I’m right next to the bus as it inches its way up the curb next to me. The crowd roars as the bu s has made it up on the curb. That burned rubber smell from the flat tires is very strong. Like every bus I’ve seen tonight, all the windows are broken, and this one has two rifles on the roof.”

“The fact that I’m speaking into the tape recorder has apparently attracted a lot of attention from some of the demonstrators on top of the bus. One of them is motioning for me to climb up and join them, and that’s what I’m going to do.”

The young man who beckoned for me to join them reached down and helped me climb aboard the bus to get a better bird’s eye view of the confrontation. This American with the tape recorder was a VIP to the protesters on the roof; many were students, but some were the rougher, transient types I’d been seeing all week. They all were fascinated with my long hair, and a few of them laughed while gently tugging it.

Meanwhile, just below us, the student monitors were struggling to keep the swarming crowd from crushing the seated soldiers. The demonstrators sang another verse of the Internationale as they were bathed in the camera lights of CNN and ABC. Intense negotiations continued between the students and the officers. Finally, the soldiers got up and began filing out. The people cheered and waved the V sign, almost giddy from their apparent triumph.

The atmosphere was now exuberant. I thought of the Hong Kong Standard article earlier that day, which said the Party was making conciliatory noises about Zhao and HuYaoBang. Maybe the students and the people were too strong, after all.

There were reports that at least one army advance had been repulsed earlier in the day; maybe the movement will pull off another May 23rd and successfully block the army’s advance; maybe Deng and Li will be forced to make co ncessions after all. But for the moment, my attention was focused on the chaos caused by the nonstop wailing sirens of racing ambulances. I climbed down from the bus and headed straight for the Goddess. One of the students from the bus accompanied me for the short walk there. He told me that the announcement coming from the loudspeakers on top of the Great Hall of the People was a call to all the government workers not to leave their posts, and to be at work on Monday morning, because this so-called unrest needed to be crushed.

Late afternoon, June 3. Demonstrators sit atop a commandeered bus next to a rifle left behind by a Chinese soldier. Hours later, the people's occupation of Tiananmen Square came to a bloody end.

Should we stay or should we go?

An important meeting was taking place to the left of the Goddess of Democracy and Freedom. My friend informed me that the contingent of small tents encircling the statue had been donated by the people of Hong Kong. A basket of flowers was at the feet of the Goddess, and she was surrounded by dozens of flags from all the universities and colleges participating in the pro-democracy movement. An assembly of close to 1000 listened intently to the emotional tone of the speakers.

“What is this speaker saying?” I asked the student.

“All the efforts are for one thing—democracy.”

An enthusiastic round of applause followed the last speaker. It was now ten thirty, and I found myself outside a group of tents under a large banner with red characters on it, at the entrance of Tiananmen near the Avenue of Eternal Peace.

“Can you tell me what the banner says?” I inquired of my student friend.

“Yes, it is the tent of the Beijing Autonomous Workers Federation. It says the red flag cannot go down. And justice will win the victory. This movement is a movement for democracy, not just the student movement.”

“For all the people,” I said to him.

“Yeah, yeah. In fact, it’s a democratic revolution. Our aim is not just to oppose corruption, not just to put down Li Peng’s government, not just to put down conservatives, but to eliminate society’s problems, all these problems. Down with dictatorship.”

The BAWF had its own mini tent city; people were going in and out of several tents under its banner. Everyone seemed somber but determined. A man nearby held some kind of newspaper in his hands.

“Was this just printed?” Is this a new declaration?” I asked him.

The student looked at it and replied, “This one is . . .I think it is a newspaper from before. No date.”

I turned my tape recorder on:

“I’m standing outside the tent which is apparently the headquarters of the Autonomous Workers union. The workers have hung various artifacts from today’s battles up on the post. There’s an army boot, some spears, belts and army license plates.

“A young man is huddled around a map showing the army locations around the city. There appears to be a high level conference going on among three activists here.

“Quite a few people are milling around Changan Avenue near the union headquarters, as the unions’s flag with its large characters is mounted at the entrance of Tiananmen Square, facing the Heavenly Gate across the way. The union’s tents are right inbetween the two main lightposts.”

I asked a young man about one of the other men involved in the conference occuring around the map of troop locations. He wore a white cloth headband with red and black characters on it.

“Nanging University,” he replied.

“And he is one of the commanders?”

“Yes.” The young man talked for a minute with the headband-wearing man, then returned.

“I have information from the Chinese army, they are coming to square at one.” [one a.m.]

“What are the students’ plans if the army comes at one?”

The man answered, “Chinese people army. We’re not going to defy them.”

I asked again, “So what are you going to do when the army comes?”

“You are friend of the Chinese people?”

“Yes, I’m a friend. I support the democracy movement.”

“Thank you. I hope that you . . . tell international news.”

“Yes, I’m on my way to my hotel to send the story back to the United States tonight,” I told him reassuringly.

“Thank you!” the young man replied emotionally. “Please, tell world we die for freedom and democracy.” As he said this, the freedom fighter took off his headband and gave it to me. There were black characters in the middle, flanked by the same character in red on each side.

“What does it say?” I asked my friend.

“It says, ‘Die for democracy, die for freedom,” he told me.

I realized then what was behind the meetings taking place in the square. The demonstrators were being informed that the army was on its way, so the hour of decision was upon them. They could leave the square while there was still time, or they could consciously decide to be martyrs before their nation and the world and make a stand for democracy in Tiananmen Square. This young man from the Beijing Autonomous Workers Federation had made his decision, and the headband was his testament to the world. It was no ordinary souvenir.

I knew it was time to return to the Minzu to hammer out that story for the San Francisco Examiner. I shook hands with everyone outside the BAWF tents and bade them good night.

“I’m going back to my hotel to write a story for the American newspaper,” I told my friend. “But I’ll be back up here by one o’clock. I will tell the world what happens here. I will tell the world the truth.”

“Thank you. Thank you, friend.”

It was now 11 o’clock, and I found myself walking down the Avenue of Eternal Peace in the middle of a massive mobilization, still reeling from the stop at the Autonomous Workers Federation tent. I thought again of the strange confrontations at the Great Hall of the People, and how they ended with the soldiers in apparent retreat. Maybe enough of the army was still backing Zhao to prevent Deng’s orders from being carried out. The citizens of Beijing seemed angry and out in the streets ready to repulse the army again; the Goddess still stood in Tiananmen Square; the government papers were saying nice things about Zhao. Maybe this could be it for Deng and Li Peng; maybe the people were too strong.

But there was too much chaos in Beijing that Saturday night. It felt as if a lurking terror was slowly rising to the surface.

“I’m heading home now; it’s a little after 11. It’s been a busy night. We’ve got a massive demonstration in the middle of the Avenue of Eternal Peace. A young man in a jeep is holding another bloodied shirt of a demonstrator. He’s holding it up next to a flag. There’s a large crowd of people on their way home; it’s kind of like Chinese rubber-necking going on between the bicyclists and pedestrians. A lot of people are standing around in the center of the street next to the blood-stained shirt, listening to the man shouting; then there are quite a few others who are stopping as they’re on their way home by foot or bicycle.

“I’m approaching the Zhonghanan compound of the Communist Party. This is the largest mobilization yet this week; there must be over 1,000 demonstrators outside confrontating at least 100 angry armed soldiers; many are shouting for Li Peng to resign. There’s a vehicle in the middle of the street that’s been turned over and is surrounded by a large crowd. Now the people are shaking the overturned car.

“I’ve just passed the compound; I’m approaching the next intersection which has another overturned vehicle in the center of it; it’s an army vehicle, a jeep of some sort. Large crowd are moving through the intersection peering at the burned out buses strewn across it. There's a lot of commotion here; crowd noise and those bicycle bells I’ve been hearing all week long.

“I’m now no more than a block from the Minzu Hotel, and . . .wait. I hear shots coming from the direction of the hotel. That’s coming from the west. I hear excited shouts that sound like warnings. Something’s definitely happened up ahead. There’s two men doing wheelies on their bicycles, tearing ass from the direction of the shots, headed this way. They’re shouting at the top of their lungs. They look like 1989 Chinese versions of Paul Revere. They’ve spotted army! There’s other people running out of this back alley, very excited, yelling, shouting. What’s that army? Army coming?”

As if anyone could understand what I was saying. Without knowing a word of Chinese besides hello and thank you, I knew that the Paul Reveres were warning the people that the army was on it way down the Avenue of Eternal Peace.

I started running towards the Minzu, noticing a car on the roadside which had been stripped of its radio and thoroughly trashed. As I got closer to the hotel, I witnessed what looked like a full scale riot occurring right outside the entrance. Through all the chaos, I could see a man being savagely beaten by an angry mob. They punched and kicked him furiously; some were getting their licks in with sticks and poles.

“They’re beating him up right here, right past me. They’re beating the shit out of him. Shouts, yells from the crowd. “Somebody’s getting beaten!”

“They’ve got a spy! They’ve got a spy!” someone was yelling in English. I recognized a young Pakistani man I had met in Tiananmen Square Tuesday evening.

“What happened? They caught a spy?” I asked him.

“I don’t know.”

I quickly went through the revolving doors and dashed to the bar for an orange soda to quench my parched throat. I bought the soda, and as I turned around, I heard an American voice shouting, “Let me in! I’m a guest in this hotel. Let me in!”

An American who was staying at the Minzu was trapped in the revolving doors holding the beaten man in his arms. Inside, the hotel manager was refusing them entrance. Outside, the crowd was pounding on the doors and yelling for the pair’s blood, having recovered from the shock that this crazy foreigner had pulled the “spy” from their clutches.

Finally the manager relented, allowing the American and beaten man into the lobby. He took them to a room on the second floor, and I followed along, curious as to the man’s identity. Responding to the manager’s interrogation, he admitted to being a police undercover agent. Aside from several cuts on his face and being shaken up, he seemed okay.

As for the American, he was congratulating himself all over the place for saving the man’s life, while lecturing the masses about due process and how mob rule had no place in the democracy they were fighting for. To me, it seemed like he was grandstanding and in dulging in self-aggrandizement. I didn’t think the Chinese people needed a lecture from this self-proclaimed ambassador of due process in the middle of their revolution and counterrevolution. To me it was a case of the masses catching an enemy agent working for those responsible for unleashing the army against them and meting out revolutionary justice.

All during the questioning of the undercover agent, we could hear the enraged crowd demanding the return of the spy and the American who rescued him. But I sensed that it wouldn’t be long before the crowd’s attention would be diverted by the advancing troops.

Twenty minutes later, the sounds of a pitched battle breaking out on Changan could be heard from the interrogation room. I hurried downstairs and flew through the revolving doors just in time to see a contingent of 20 or so riot police in the middle of the street armed with tear gas, hiding behind shields and being pelted with bricks and rocks from hundreds of angry citizens.

My Pakistani friend was standing outside the Minzu’s doors, along with 20 or 30 others who were watching the unfolding street battle.

“Hi. Was that really a spy in there?” he asked me.

“Yeah, yeah. He admitted to the hotel manager he was undercover. How was he exposed?”

“I don’t know. Look at that. There they go again!”

Sure enough, the brick-throwing crowd was emerging from the shadows of the side street next to the Minzu and making another charge at the besieged police crouched behind their shields. For the next ten minutes, a cat-and-mouse game ensued, with the missile-throwing demonstrators charging the retreating riot police. Then the people backed off into the shadows, and the police advanced again.

Meanwhile, hotel personnel were trying to persuade those of us watching the battle to enter the hotel for our safety, but without much success. Suddenly, the largest crowd to emerge from the blackness of the side street rushed the police. This time, the cops’ retreat was final. They threw down their shield and disappeared. The demonstrators seemed buoyed by this latest victory; it appeared the people had again triumphed.

Then gunfire erupts only a few blocks away. The onlookers outside the Minzu no longer needed any persuading; most of us voluntarily entered the sanctuary of the Minzu’s lobby.

A few minutes later, the first casualty was brought into the lobby wrapped in a bloodied bedsheet. He was a soldier whose head had apparently been bashed in by a brick and was covered in blood. He looked no older than 17.

From the sounds of the riotous commotion and the soldiers’ gunfire, a fierce battle was raging outside the Minzu. Within minutes, the lobby was transformed in a makeshift infirmary as three more teenage soldiers were carried in, wrapped in blood-soaked sheets. Their faces were covered with so much blood that you could not recognize them. One soldier looked as dead as the first boy brought in, his head bashed in by bricks so badly that you could see his eyes popping out amidst his brains. The other two soldiers were moving slightly.

At least ten more bodies were brought into the hotel from the street fighting. A few of them were soldiers, their faces also covered with blood, barely alive. The rest appeared to be civilians wounded by gunshots. Several young Chinese roughed up a British-sounding man holding a camera, apparently for taking a picture they didn’t think he should have shot. He pleaded with them, but to no avail; the camera was confiscated and broken.

All hell was breaking loose in the streets near the Minzu, as the gunfire was growing closer. I was trying to catch a glimpse of the raging street battle when hotel personnel began pushing us to the rear of the lobby. It’s a good thing they did, for minutes later, bullets were flying through the windows into the lobby. I hit the deck behind a huge painting at the rear of the lobby. Everyone else scatttered to take cover from the hail of bullets terrorizing the lobby.

As I hid behind the painting I felt rage toward the old men who had ordered the army into the city. First, they sent unarmed teenage boys to face the citizens’ wrath; now the tanks and guns were blazing away. I thought back to the day before, when they had sent unarmed jogging soldiers into Tiananmen to be routed by the masses. It was as i f they had purposely sent outmanned forces into the large crowds, knowing they would be humiliated; all the more easy to rile the armed soldiers and whip them into a murderous frenzy.

Minutes later the gunfire into the lobby stopped. The hotel manager herded us into the elevators, instructing us to go to our rooms and remain there. Joining me in the elevator were the British photojournalist who had lost his camera, Bob Gannon, and my Pakistani friend, whose name I never learned. Neither had any place to go at the moment, so I invited them to my room. In essence, we were under house arrest.

My room offered shelter from the storm; a chance to take comfort in each other’s company. Bob was the most physically shaken up from his altercation with the Chinese students in the lobby. I found out he worked for the Manchester Guardian, and had covered the Palestinian intifada in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. He spoke admiringly of the Palestinians, and compared the terror of the Beijing night with Israel’s iron-fisted military occupation of Palestinian land. He started telling us how the angry demonstrators outside the Minzu had attacked the young soldiers, something I had missed while witnessing the interrogation of the spy.

There was as a lull in the gunfire outside. I turned on the tape recorder.

“Once they charged,” gasped Bob.

Pakistani man, turning to me: “He’s talking about what we saw first, or after when they came in?”

Me: “No, he’s talking about when they charged, not when I was out there with you, but after that.”

Bob: “They just kept bashing him on the head.”

Me: “There’s a lot of pent up anger coming out tonight, it’s all exploding. I kept saying all week, it can’t go on like this. It’s the old story, though, it’s the old men, old fucking men like Deng Xiaoping and Yang Shankgun up there, sending out these kids and the kids get killed. We all might be out of here tomorrow, guys. They might just kick us all out.

“You’re lucky you came out of this relative okay,” I said to Bob. “Go ahead, clean yourself up. Such are the hazards of being a journalist, eh?”

“Yeah,” laughed Bob.

Me: “What was that, gunshots?”

Indeed, gunfire had rudely broken the all-too-brief period of calm. Suddenly all power in the room went out, including the air conditioner. Then the power bounced back on, but it must have been the hotel’s backup generator, for from the window we could see the city was still in darkness. My room was not at the front of the Minzu facing the Avenue of Eternal Peace; it was on the side, but from the window we could see a portion of Changan and Beijing in the background. As ambulance sirens screamed from the city streets, the Pakistani said good bye and left the room.

Me: “There’s some people down there. That’s not the front of the building. That’s the side.”

Bob: “The front’s over there, isn’t it?”

Me: “No, the front’s over there. It sounds like they are shooting at random, just opening up with volleys. Machine gun fire too. There’s crowds of people running down the street there.”

We heard the International coming from the street below. Beijing’s citizens were answering the army’s bullets with the communist anthem.

Me: “These people are incredible. You have to admire them, they’re fucking unbelievable. Like the Palestinians.”

Bob nodded his head in agreement. “They’re putting a body down the road on the back of a cart.”

Me: “Those fucking Stalinists.”

I turned off the tape recorder for the final time. We decided that Bob wasn’t going anywhere that night, since his hotel was a mile or so down the road in the direction of the advancing army.

I got on the phone and called Andrew Ross, the foreign affairs editor for the Examiner. Andrew had told me before I left the Bay Area that if I found myself in the middle of something newsworthy to give him a call for the eyewitness report. Having seen what I’d seen that day, and now sequestered inside the Minzu while the army’s guns were blazing, it seemed like the appropriate time.

I spent the next 45 minutes telling Andrew about the incredible confrontations between the soldiers and protesters at the Great Hall; the last stop on Tiananmen Square at the Beijing Autonomous Workers Federation tents; the beating of the “spy” outside the Minzu; the ensuing street battle, and now the gunfire against the background of the singing of the Internationale. At one point, Bob called me over to the window to see more citizens being shot and put into bicycle carts and carried off. I held the phone outside the window so Andrew could hear for himself the gunshots piercing Beijing’s night. He said it was all great copy and would appear on the front page of tomorrow’s Sunday Examiner, and added, “Hey Nivek, take care of yourself. It’s not worth getting killed for.”

When I hung up with Andrew, I joined Bob at the windows for a view of that portion of Changan Avenue visible to us. By now, a steady procession of tanks and armored personnel carriers were rumbling down the avenue on their way to Tiananmen Square. Soldiers perched on top of every other vehicle were firing indiscriminately at citizens who were hurrying to get out of harm’s way. The large crowds that had filled Changan earlier were now seeking refuge down sidestreets, many shouting and th rowing bricks. But many were being gunned down. Dozens upon dozens of bodies were picked up, placed on bicycle carts and taken away. Through it all, the steady backdrop of screams and the haunting chorus of the Internationale provided a grisly scene from the 20th floor of the Minzu Hotel.

An hour later, just after the last of the army vehicles had passed, a huge crowd of demonstrators—men, women and children—reemerged from the shadows and charged down the street in pursuit of the tanks and APCs, yelling furiously and still singing the Internationale. Red Cross trucks moved through the streets, and it seemed as if tens of thousands of people were converging on the square from every direction. The army’s mission was to clear out the square and physically crush the pro-democracy movement, but it wasn’t going to happen without a fight. This was not a vanquished, demoralized people ready to passively submit to the forces of repression. They would fight with whatever they had. Unfortunately for th em, that didn’t include guns. The bricks and rocks had been enough to crush the heads of the teenage recruits. Bob and I knew we had seen the first army casualties of the night.

The long, agonizing Saturday night dragged interminably into Sunday morning. Three, four, five am, and the ominous popping sounds from soldiers’ guns did not end. How many people were dying? There was still shooting going on near the Minzu, but we could discern a more distant gunfire coming from the direction of Tiananmen Square. I thought of the scene in the square just before I left, shortly before 11. Many had decided to leave, but many more seemed willing to remain and meet the army in a defiant last stand, defending the Goddess and all she stood for.

Tell the world we die for freedom.

My head was spinning as I watched the bodies being carted away from Changan. In all my years as a Trotskyist I never dreamed I’d come face to face with Stalinist terror. I thought of the earlier faces of Stalinism that history had brought us: 1953, when the East German Stalinists crushed an worker uprising; 1956, when the Soviet Stalinists smashed the Hungarian experiment in democratic socialism; 1968, when they did the same in Czechoslovakia, violently ending the Prague Spring; the excesses of Mao’s Cultural Revolution in the mid-60s; 1970, when the Polish Army shot down workers protesting price increases. Then I thought of the more modern manifestations of the Stalinist perversion. In Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge’s butcher under Pol Pot, strongly supported by these same Chinese Stalinists; and Bernard Coard’s Stalinist terror in Grenada, which succeeded in murdering the Grenadian Revolution’s leader, Maurice Bishop, beheading the revolution and handing the island over to Washington in 1983. All crimes against working people committed in the name of socialism.

It was now 5:30 am, and amidst the cries of anguish, gunfire and the Internationale, we could see ominous smoke rising above Tiananmen Square. The stink of tear gas, gunpowder and smoke lay thick, and gunfire reverberated in this dark city, where fires burned from wrecked vehicles. I knew the Goddess of Democracy and Freedom could no longer be standing. How many had died defending her? I had this overwhelming desire to be up there eyewitnessing what was going on, and I cursed myself for having left the square at all. As dawn rose just before six, I finally drifted off to sleep to the sound of wailing sirens and an occasional volley of gunfire.

**Chapter 9: Sunday, June 4th**

This was not going to be the kind of Sunday to sleep in. A specter of death haunted the early Beijing morning. Just after nine I went downstairs to survey the damage. A crowd of curious citizens had gathered in front of the Minzu, staring in awe at the many bullet holes in the windows over the front doors. I ventured out into the battle-scarred street. The people of Beijing were in a state of shock and grief. I made my way toward Tiananmen amidst the carnage of the fierce fighting from the previous night. Jeeps were overturned and burning; buses barricaded the intersections with all of the windows smashed out; on top of one bus were two rifles mounted on a lean-to. A message on a wall written in black paint stopped me in my tracks; most of it is in Chinese, except for the last word, which is in red: "blood.?"

A dazed man walked up to me and volunteered: "The Chinese people are highly miserable-ized." Another said: "Tell the USA we need guns," as smoke was still visible rising from Tiananmen Square.

I walked a little further and observed a gruesome sight--a burned corpse in a soldier's uniform was lying on the street. Several different individuals told me that the soldier was a tank driver who had run over 11 people as they were trying to climb a fence while attempting to escape a tear gas attack. Outraged citizens had then doused a blank with gas and thrown it on top of the tank. As the driver tried to get out, the people burned him alive. I left a large crowd of curious onlookers staring with open mouths at the burned corpse. Someone else told me of a similar scene elsewhere in Beijing, where the bodies of six charred soldiers were hanging from Quingha Bridge.

When I returned to the location of the dead soldier he was now hanging from a noose tied to the window of a burned-out bus. He was holding his hat in his hands, and his shoes were off. I noticed soldiers on tanks at the next intersection viewing this scene through binoculars. Crowds of people got as close as they could to the soldiers, taunting them. When they got too close, or when they yelled "fascists" at the troops, tear gas was fired at them.

Throughout the day, intermittent gunfire could be heard all over Beijing. Fighting was still going on in various parts of the city. From the sky came the ominous buzz of observation helicopters keeping a close eye on the battles below. My mobility was limited to Changan Avenue, from the Minzu to the intersection preceding the square, where the army's tank blockade prevented anyone from going further.

Tiananmen Square had clearly been retaken by the army, which was rapidly consolidating its position around it. I heard reports that troops were pouring into Tiananmen from all directions. But for now, there was no army presence on that part of Changan from the Minzu to one block before the square. The streets were littered with flattened bicycles and bike racks. The people of Beijing walked around in a traumatized daze. The faces that were so full of hope one week earlier now showed shock, terror and angry disbelief. How could the People's Army turn so savagely on the people? And what exactly happened in Tiananmen Square?

Sensing correctly that I was a journalist, at least 10 different people walked up to me and volunteered their testimony of the Tiananmen tragedy. They said that the soldiers killed and wounded many students and workers in the square, and shot many as they tried to flee. Troops fired indiscriminately at unarmed citizens in the streets surrounding Tiananmen, which we had witnessed from the hotel room.

Then the testimony took a turn for the chilling. I heard from five different people that when the tanks first entered the square, they went straight for the tents belonging to the Beijing Autonomous Workers Federation, even before they smashed the Goddess to pieces. The tanks rolled over the BAWF tents, crushing to death those inside. One reported that the students were still singing the Internationale just before the tanks killed them. Others testified that soldiers used flamethrowers to burn many of the bodies in the square before dumping them in a nearby river. Still others told me that they saw soldiers drag doctors and students out of ambulances and shoot them.

One student reported that the army had intentionally sent spies into Tiananmen Square and university campuses with the expectation that some would be exposed and beaten or killed. This was to rile the soldiers and make it easier to whip them up into a murderous frenzy. I thought of the "spy" who was at the center of all the trouble outside the Minzu, and the unarmed soldiers sent jogging into Tiananmen to be ridiculed by the far more numerous demonstrators.

A related report that I heard repeatedly while walking up and down Changan Sunday afternoon was that the army had set up the students by leaving behind guns with missing parts or lacking ammunition. When people would grab them, soldiers took photographs. I thought of the lean-to rifles atop the liberated buses. The foundation for the government 's justification of the massacre was already being established--a concoction of deception consisting of agent provocateurs, frame-up and lies--weapons long cherished and utilized by Stalinists. Deng and Li Peng would surely say that China was faced with the fires of a counterrevolutionary rebellion; that it was the counterrevolutionaries who were violent, confiscating guns and killing our brave young soldiers.

The streets were rife with rumors that rival army units were exchanging gunfire; that those divisions loyal to Zhao Zhang were rebelling against Deng?s crackdown and on the verge of waging a civil war against the pro-Deng divisions.

The foreign press was already picking up on this theme. It is said that the 38th Division, the unit geographically closest to Beijing, was under the command of pro-Zhao officers who opposed the use of force to end the demonstrations. The soldiers who had retaken Tiananmen and did most of the shooting belonged to the 27th Division, the unit commanded by a son-in-law of President Yang Shangkun. This division consisted of soldiers from the outer provinces of China belonging to ethnic minorities who speak different dialects than the majority Han dialect spoken in Beijing. They were also battle-hardened veterans of China's 1978 border war with Vietnam. Several people told me that the troops of the 27th Division had been seen laughing hysterically, as if they had been drugged, while firing at will into crowds along the Avenue of Eternal Peace.

As I walked past the burning jeeps and overturned buses that lined Changan, I thought about this civil war theory in relation to the strange confrontations between demonstrators and soldiers late Saturday afternoon behind the Great Hall of the People. These troops belonged to the 38th Division. While the atmosphere was tense and many of the soldiers appeared angry, there was also an element of fraternization in the air; some of the soldiers seemed more confused than angry, and white flags were waved while soldiers and citizens sang the Internationale.

After several hours of this standoff, it was the army that withdrew and appeared to retreat into the Great Hall of the People. What was going on here? Why didn't the armed soldiers make their move then and there? Maybe there was some credence to the civil war theory. I had to admit that when I left Tiananmen at 11 o'clock, I felt buoyed by the turn of events behind the Great Hall. Maybe Zhao had enough support in the army to turn things around after all.

But as I passed Zhonghanan on the way back to the Minzu, my confidence had dissipated, for the scene there had been an accurate barometer of the relationship of forces all week. And the mood had crystallized--the army versus the people. It was a sobering sight--100 stern, armed, helmeted soldiers staring down the crowd of demonstrators. By the time I saw the Paul Revere bicyclists doing wheelies and yelling at the top of their lungs, I knew the Beijing Spring was over.

Which is not to say there was not dissatisfaction within the army over the leadership's decision to crack down on the protests, or that Zhao did not enjoy support among some army officers, including those in charge of the Beijing-based 38th Division. And it is true that the lion 's share of the violence was committed by the 27th Division, whose soldiers were from distant ethnic provinces speaking different dialects than Beijing's citizens.

It is possible there might have been a brief exchange of fire between units as had been rumored. But civil war was not in the air. The divisions in the army were not deep enough for that. And there was no fight left in the people. The smashing of the Goddess of Democracy and Freedom symbolized the crushing of the pro-democracy movement she represented.

It took a massive deployment of the People's Liberation Army to forcibly clear out the square and end the protests. It required a long night of terror to physically destroy the Tiananmen demonstrations. The people of Beijing had responded to the army's brutality with heroic resistance.

They did not go down without a fight that evening of June 3rd. They burned buses and army vehicles and built barricades throughout the city to prevent the tanks and armored personnel carriers (APCs) from getting through. And Beijing's citizens were unarmed; they fought back against the advancing, shooting army with whatever weapons they could find--bricks, sticks, poles and homemade firebombs. I saw hundreds, perhaps thousands of citizens following the first wave of tanks and APCs into Tiananmen Square. I heard reports on Sunday, and watched news footage later, of demonstrators trying to stop the tanks in Tiananmen by throwing bricks and setting them afire. I witnessed the young recruits being brought into the Minzu's lobby with their heads busted open, and the charred corpse of the soldier hanging from the bus.

But the source of all the violence was the army. Throughout the entire Beijing Spring, including the final week that I witnessed, the Tiananmen protests were entirely peaceful, almost Woodstock-like. Militant, yes, but peaceful, and not a trace of counterrevolution, only the desire for reform. The violence did not come until Saturday night, when the army invaded Beijing, guns blazing. Despite the government's attempted frame-ups, such as the planting of guns, and the widespread use of agent provocateurs, like the Minzu spy, the vast majority of dead and wounded were unarmed students and workers shot by soldiers firing indiscriminately.

There was sporadic gunfire in Beijing throughout the day and evening on Sunday, amidst reports that troop reinforcements were on their way into the city. I took a walk through the streets behind the hotel with an American woman I had met in the Minzu's restaurant. She had been studying in Beijing for six months, and she said what struck her most about the Chinese was their racist attitudes toward the Africans living there. We recalled how there had been near riots earlier in the year when Chinese students attacked African men for consorting with Chinese women. Another payoff of 40 years of Stalinist misleadership and miseducation--the total lack of internationalist solidarity, replaced instead by rampant chauvinism and nationalism.

The scheduled Sunday night rendezvous with Wang, Liu and Zhu had been preempted by the massacre. I wondered if they were still alive, or if I would ever hear from them again.

I spent Sunday evening holed up in my room at the Minzu, listening to the ongoing gunfire. Shortly after 4:30 am, I heard a loud motorized roar from the street below. I called the American woman I had befriended earlier, whose room looked out directly in front of the hotel, providing a much better view of Changan Avenue than did mine. I asked her if I could come to her room to better witness what was happening outside, and she consented, her voice quivering with fear. When I got there, I knew why. A steady procession of tanks and APCs moved ominously past the hotel, crushing the bicycle racks-turned barricades in their way. Every few minutes, soldiers perched atop the tanks fired wildly into the shadows.

The procession of tanks and APCs seemed to last an eternity; I lost count of them after 40. When the last vehicle had passed, a few individuals emerged from their hiding spots amidst the shadows, shouting to each other. One of them ran out into the middle of the street and picked up the bike rack to barricade the street again. Next I saw an ambulance drive up and stop across the avenue. Someone got out, picked up a body that was lying in the street, and placed it in the ambulance. Shouts followed, then that ominous motorized roar was drawing closer, and the ambulance sped away. Ten more tanks rumbled down the Avenue of Eternal Peace, crushing the makeshift barricades, soldiers still firing at shadows. The army was fortifying its positions around Tiananmen Square.

At 5 am the prospects looked bleak for making my scheduled 11:15 am flight from Beijing Airport. At seven, the U.S. Embassy called to say that the airport was open, but I was on my own in getting there. This was not encouraging, for there was no public transit or taxis running. As I packed my audio cassettes and other materials deep into my luggage, I expected police or soldiers to bust in and arrest me for violating the martial law restrictions on the press.

Then I remembered that way back on Friday afternoon, Mr. Xing had said something about a last appointment on Monday morning, and that his taxi driver would pick me up at 8:30. Obviously the massacred had canceled any last appointment with the TV Ministry. But the one thread of hope I clung to was that the friendly taxi driver would remember that pick-up time. It was a long shot, because the rumor going around was that the taxi companies were forbidding their drivers from working on Monday morning. It was still far too dangerous.

At exactly 8:25 am, I walked outside the Minzu into a state of chaos. Everyone was trying to leave Beijing; other foreigners were frantically trying to buy a ride to the airport. But the takers were few and far between. Suddenly I noticed the waving arm of my taxi driver. I ran over to him and, in his very best English, he said he had defied his superiors' orders and would take me to the airport. He'd been worried about how I was going to get out of there.

The taxi driver had to take a long, tortuous route out of the city in order to avoid the massive army presence, but eventually we were on the long road to Beijing Airport. Along the way, we passed a large contingent of soldiers in 23 trucks in a scene that reflected the contradictory relationship of forces so characteristic of Beijing that week. There were many citizens interacting with the soldiers. The first group we passed seemed friendly to the troops, but further down the road the atmosphere appeared very tense. At one point my driver slowed down and yelled to the soldiers angrily, "You've killed a few thousand already, why don't you kill a few more?" One soldier seemed uncomfortably shamefaced at the driver's tongue lashing.

The scene at the airport was even more chaotic than it had been on my first night. I embraced the driver and thanked him profusely for risking his job to give me a ride. He told me I cold repay him by telling the truth about what his government had done.

Beijing Airport was crawling with foreigners desperately seeking exit from the turmoil-wracked country. After a long wait on line, I handed the harried airline agent my ticket. She informed me that my reservation had been canceled. By whom, I asked. She wasn't able to reply. Maybe it was the panic that was gripping my body, but I found myself causing a scene and insisting that everything was in order; the ticket was valid because I had check with San Francisco before leaving.

Amazingly, the ticket agent reversed her decision, and I was on my way. We boarded the plane shortly after 11 only to sit there for over two hours. Fear and loathing in Beijing. I was convinced that the rumors flying around the plane that they were checking our luggage were true. I couldn't shake the imagery of Chinese police confiscating my tapes and dragging me off to jail.

Finally, just after 1 pm, the jet took off. It turned out the long delay was caused by a shortage of airline staff. I recalled that on Sunday there were rumors in Beijing of a general strike the next day. Approximately sixty percent of Beijing's workers did not report to work that Monday, some consciously in protest of the massacre, others staying home out of fear. But very little of it was the result of an organized effort; like much of what had transpired during the Beijing Spring, it was more spontaneous than organized.

An hour after takeoff, we made the brief stop at Shanghai Airport, where apart from a slightly nervous atmosphere, things appeared to be "business as usual." Soon we were airborne again for San Francisco International Airport. Fifteen hours later, the Chinese flight attendant announced: "The time of arrival in San Francisco is 1:08 pm."

**Chapter 10: Aftermath**

Things happened quickly in the next few weeks. The world watched in awe as a brave young Chinese man faced down an army tank in the middle of the Avenue of Eternal Peace; he was subsequently arrested for this "counterrevolutionary" act and was not heard from again, generating rumors of his execution. Fang Lizhi and his wife Li Shuxian sought asylum in the U.S. Embassy, while Beijing demanded the Americans turn them over to face arrest for their leadership of the counterrevolution.

In Shanghai, the country's largest city, up to half the city's workforce had walked off their jobs in response to the massacre. On June 6th, a railroad train crashed into a peaceful demonstration at Shanghai's railway station, killing six protesters. The train was burned and the tracks blocked by thousands of angry citizens. Tens of thousands marched on June 9th in Shanghai to protest the Beijing crackdown. Among them were over 1,000 workers marching under the banner of the Shanghai Autonomous Workers Federation. Within days, however, most of Shanghai's workers had returned to work; the authorities arrested nine leaders of the Shanghai AWF for being "enemies of the people"; and the unofficial student union at the city's East China Teachers College voted to dissolve.

Shanghai's demonstrations were not the only manifestations of resistance and outrage over the Tiananman massacre. Protesters reportedly blocked a major rail line and a bridge over the Yangtze River in the urban complex of Wuhan. Guangzhou (formerly Canton) reported similar actions. Army units in Chengdu, the capital of the southern province of Sichuan, reportedly killed demonstrators in that city.

On June 12th, China's government press exhorted the official union body, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, to mobilize workers across China to destroy all independent workers federations that existed. This in itself was testimony not only to the national scope of China's 1989 pro-democracy movement, but to the increasing social and political weight of the workers in that movement.

On June 14th, the Public Security Bureau announced that the Autonomous Workers Federations were illegal and counterrevolutionary. Three leaders of Beijing's AWF were put on the "wanted" list, and one of them, 26-year-old Liu Qiang, a worker from Beijing's Factory N 3209, was shown on CCTV being handcuffed and dragged off a train in Mohhot, Northern Mongolia's capital.

On June 21st, three Shanghai workers were executed for allegedly setting fire to the train on June 6th. By then, the mopping up end of the murderous repression of June 4th was well under way. Workers were publicly humiliated and paraded in front of TV cameras as "counterrevolutionaries" before being shot by firing squads. At least 37 individuals, many of them AWF members, were executed in this manner. The government alleged that it had received 1620 phone calls from the public fingering movement activists over "hotlines" set up for this purpose. On June 14th, 32 people, including worker activists, were arrested boarding trains at the Beijing railway station. By the 21st of June, over 1300 citizens had been arrested by the authorities.

Despite the outbreaks of resistance and protests in many areas of China, including the militantly defiant Shanghai demonstrations, when the tanks crushed the demonstrations with brute force in Beijing, the 1989 pro-democracy campaign was finished.

Where did it come from? What did it mean? What factors gave rise to the massive mobilizations for radical reforms and democratic rights in Beijing and other cities?

The glib explanation offered by various bourgeois commentators is that the pro-democracy movement was a natural consequence of the sizeable influx of Chinese students into the U.S. throughout the late '70s and '80s. The students, the theory goes, were so intoxicated with America's capitalist democracy that they attempted to import it once back in China. The construction of the replica of the Statue of Liberty in Tiananmen Square supposedly confirms this line of thinking.

While the Beijing Spring resulted from a more complex interaction of factors than this theory suggests, there are at least kernels of truth to it. The Chinese students did not return to their country possessed with a burning desire to import institutions of Western parliamentary democracy. What turned the students on about the United States were those democratic ideals that guided the revolutionary democratic tradition in the American Revolution, and the civil liberties and freedoms embodied in the Bill of Rights.

"Give me liberty/or give me death!" read the poster at Beijing University. The students were impressed with what the Statue of Liberty represented--America in its earlier, revolutionary period--not necessarily what the U.S. political system represents today. The fact that some students may have had illusions in the latter is irrelevant to the dynamics of the Beijing Spring.

Any discussion of "democracy" must draw a distinction between parliamentary democratic institutions and the democratic rights working people have fought for in order to have more political space to organize and function freely. The U.S. Constitution provided the framework for the young democratic republic established 200 years ago after the American revolutionists won their independence from England. At the time, it was a vast improvement over the rule of monarchs and colonialism, and even today it is a more favorable environment for working people to live under than the more extreme forms of capitalist rule, such as fascism.

However, this democracy was still very much a "capitalist" one; it was based on upholding and defending the rule of private property. One day in the future it will be replaced when the working class takes political power, expropriates the capitalist class and establishes a workers and farmers government. The workers will create newer, higher forms of democracy, "socialist" democracy (councils, soviets, mass organizations, etc.) which will enable them to directly administer and take command of the economy and the state.

For working people, the most important part of the U.S. Constitution is the first 10 amendments--the Bill of Rights--and other subsequent amendments that have extended democratic rights. These rights were the result of the struggles of working people to gain more political space and to extend the layers of people who are considered citizens with equal rights under the law. These include the freedoms of speech, assembly, press and religion, the right to petition for redress of grievances, the right to privacy, and others.

The sources of both the democratic republic and these democratic rights were the bourgeois democratic revolutions of the 17th through 19th centuries in Europe and the United States. Many times these two were merged as democratic revolutionary movements arose. But in the 20th century, the difference for working people throughout the world between parliamentary democracy and democratic rights is that the widest possible expansion of the latter is absolutely essential to our survival; they are unambiguously in the working class's interests, and we have more at stake in defending them than anyone else. These democratic rights are needed by workers to gain more elbow room and have more political space to organize and function politically. They are also prerequisites for workers' power and the transition to socialism.

Parliamentary democracy, on the other hand, serves to block working people from meaningfully participating in political life. In today's world, it is an obstacle to genuine democracy; it keeps workers straitjacketed politically; it is rife with corruption, graft and privilege.

The Chinese students were organizing and demanding those democratic rights that have been denied the people by Communist Party rule, and which have been won by workers in many capitalist countries. Their demands for freedom of the press, speech, assembly, coupled with their campaign against the bureaucracy's corruption and privilege, were winning the support of the Chinese working people.

But contrary to the assertions of the senior leadership of the Communist Party, the pro-democracy demonstrators were calling for reforms, not revolution. No one in Beijing was talking about overthrowing socialism or the Communist Party and establishing a capitalist republic. In fact, on the whole, the students expressed pride in the accomplishments achieved by the Party made possible by the overturning of capitalism. Even those voices calling for multiparties did so within the framework of Communist Party rule and socialist legality.

It is also true that the students in Tiananmen Square were not calling on the workers and farmers to organize their own instruments of struggle that could replace the rule of the privileged bureaucracy with the democratic rule of the working class. Some Marxist organizations in the United States, like Socialist Action, a Trotskyist sect that split from the SWP in 1983, have said that the Tiananmen students were consciously leading a movement for socialist democracy in China, and that we were seeing in Tiananmen was the embryonic beginning of workers' councils that could lead the fight for socialist democracy in China. This is false. One must not project one's own consciousness onto other people's movements; we must instead look objectively at each movement's dynamics.

Beijing's 1989 pro-democracy movement was not a conscious fight for socialist democracy. Rather, it was a student-led, anti-bureaucratic privilege, militant mass movement for bourgeois democratic rights that was winning the support of China's working people. The students simply demanded that the government grant the people the same democratic rights enjoyed by workers in most capitalist countries. When they met an intransigent hard line from Deng and Li, the students called for their removal and supported those in the Party like Zhao who seemed to agree with them.

But the Beijing Spring was more than just a matter of Chinese students returning home from the United States inspired by America's democratic ideals. Why were the students striking a responsive chord among China's workers and farmers?

Contrary to the glib assertions of many bourgeois commentators, far from having an anticommunist character, the 1989 pro-democracy movement had a largely anti-capitalist dynamic. Since coming to power in 1978, Deng Xiaoping steered China in the direction of private enterprise and free market mechanisms. "To be rich is glorious," crowed the Communist Party leaders to the farmers in the countryside, in a 1980s version of Soviet leader Bukharin's 1920s slogan for the Soviet peasants, "Enrich yourselves."

As Deng increasingly relied on the free market to open more space for capitalist commodity production in agriculture and industry and expanded foreign trade and investment by capitalists from other countries, the inevitable social and economic dislocations and pressures followed. While economic growth averaged nearly 10 percent annually for the previous decade, social antagonisms and differentiations increased, as did rampant corruption throughout the bureaucracy. Rich lenders, traders, and factory owners appeared on the scene.

In the countryside, the pro-capitalist initiatives generated a layer of wealthy farmers and widening disparities of income and living standards. The rate of inflation rose to 50 percent, the highest since the 1949 Revolution; grain production continued to drop or stagnate; fertilizer shortages led to peasant attacks on warehouses. All of this contributed to the movement of millions of impoverished rural people into the cities.

During the 1980s the workers and farmers faced a tightening economic squeeze. Austerity budgets with higher taxes were imposed; wages and living standards fell while prices rose. In March 1989, the government concerned about the unrest that could flow from all of the above-mentioned problems, imposed still-tighter administrative controls over all private businesses and regional economic bodies. In the austerity budget adopted that month, new taxes were imposed on farmers and businesses, and 18,000 construction projects were halted.

The "new rich" in China were doing quite well from Deng's reliance on the free market, but working people weren't, and the result was a heightened polarization in both city and countryside. As Wang said in the square, "The ordinary people want government to correct some mistakes. Because the reform policy is hurting every ordinary people . . . They seem to forgot about the people."

A combination of growing frustration over the denial of basic democratic rights and the spiraling economic problems and hardships drove up to a million people into Tiananmen Square in May and show their support for the pro-democracy students. Tiananmen became the focal point for all Chinese suffering under the bureaucracy's misrule--the worker whose wages were falling; the farmer whose standard of living was plummeting; the displaced rural proletariat who had been thrown off the land by the Party's free market bent; the student embarrassed by the nation's backwardness and stifling repression of ideas.

The regime was really in a fix, for even those individuals who had materially benefited from the pro-capitalist measures--the cab drivers who were free to make more money, or those like Liu, who owned four stores in Beijing's free market--strongly supported the demands for democracy. It seemed that everyone had their grievances to bring to Tiananmen Square in the spring of 1989. If they weren't suffering in their pocketbooks, they were angry over the government's continued denial of fundamental democratic rights. And for many demonstrators, it was both. While some students expressed resentment over the money being made by taxi drivers, the drivers were proud of the students and strongly supported their campaign. When the workers saw the students step forward and take action, they responded by marching into Tiananmen in solidarity with China's youth.

Like Gorbachev in Moscow, Beijing's Stalinists reacted to the deepening economic crisis in their country (brought on in part by their own bureaucratic mismanagement) by embarking on a free market path, the "economic restructuring" known in the Soviet Union as "perestroika." Deng Xiaoping took China on a much more accelerated version of perestroika. Though still a long way from a full-scale restoration of capitalist property relations, in other words, while still operating under the parameters of the nationalized, planned economy, thus remaining a workers state, Deng's perestroika relied on market mechanisms and resuscitated private enterprise to a far greater degree than Gorbachev's reforms ever did in the Soviet Union.

Gorbachev was shrewd enough to realize that since his economic restructuring wold cause painful hardships for Soviet workers, he would need to also provide some amount of political liberalization to give him political space to make perestroika palatable--hence, glasnost. The Beijing Spring resulted in part because Deng adopted an even heavier dose of free enterprise, with all its harsh prescriptions but without any political liberalization accompanying it. This combination created the foundation for the Tiananmen mass movement.

The Chinese Gorbachevs were represented by the more moderate, liberal faction of Hu Yao Bang and later Zhao Zhang. They argued fervently that the only way the free market reforms could work was if they were accompanied by a relaxation of political control and monopoly by the Communist Party; allowing more democratic rights and free expression; and adopting a conciliatory attitude toward the students by opening a dialogue with them as a means of diffusing the protests. But as the Tiananmen occupation continued, Deng, Li and Yang Shangkun were able to convince the Party that if they allowed the paralysis and chaos to continue, the antibureaucratic rebellion would hurtle out of control and their rule would be threatened. The party would be over.

"Listen to what these bourgeois loving students are demanding," the hard-liners told the Party. "They want us to disclose all our assets and incomes. They want our privileges to cease."

The students were not only demanding more democratic rights; they were articulating the workers' outrage over the rampant corruption that extended to all layers of the Party. The anti-bureaucratic privilege dynamic sent shivers down the spines of the bureaucrats. "It's them or us," Deng correctly observed.

The crisis facing the ruling caste in China was not acute enough to rupture it. So the caste was unified enough to act in concert and close ranks behind the Party, which was still the best instrument to preserve their privileges. By August 1991 in the Soviet Union, however, the crisis did rupture the caste into the hardline faction, whose coup attempt was thwarted by the large mobilizations of working people in Moscow and Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), and the dominant wings of the caste, led by Boris Yeltsin, who decided the best way to maintain their privileges was to abandon whole sections of the caste, including the hopelessly discredited Communist Party.

Unlike the situation in Poland, where the industrial workers formed Solidarity to lead the fight for democracy, in China it was up to the students to provide the leadership of the Beijing Spring. While there had been worker involvement in the 1978-79 Wall of Democracy campaign in Beijing, organizationally most workers were still under the tight control of the Communist Party, from the official trade union federation to the work unit. The students, knowing their own frustration and sensing the growing widespread dissatisfaction among the masses, decided to seize the initiative and take action. Inspired by China's history, revolutionary legacy and traditions, including the May 4th, 1919 student protests in Tiananmen Square demanding democratic rights and national sovereignty, the students stepped forward and said, "Okay, if no one else is able to stand up and demand democracy, then we students will do so."

They were inspired also by student movements in other countries like the United States, as well as by other mass movements for justice that had occurred in recent decades around the world, such as the antiwar, civil rights, and women's rights struggles. The students, keenly aware of the watchful eye of the international media, showed this influence when they shrewdly blanketed Tiananmen Square with signs in English reading, "We Shall Overcome."

Thus the students decided they could wait no longer for others to act. They began modestly articulating their own grievances and demands for more autonomy in the educational system. Emboldened by the success of the initial demonstrations in the square, sensing the support of society at large, and encouraged by the strength of the more moderate faction of the Party headed by Zhao Zhang, the students picked up the torch and ran with it, and in doing so became the moral conscience of China in the spring of 1989.

Further fueling the students' drive was a profound sense of righteous anger. They didn't pretend to know all the answers; they were the first to admit they had no blueprint for a better society. But they were profoundly embarrassed over the fact that a small group of autocratic octogenarians were still ruling China with an iron grip.

Many students realized that on their own they could not effectuate the kind of reforms they were demanding. “All we want is the truth/Just give us some truth,” the students were saying to the country and the world, in the spirit of John Lennon. As they looked around China, they saw the people were enjoying fewer democratic rights than working people in the advanced capitalist countries possessed; they saw pervasive corruption and privilege in the ruling Party bureaucracy. And by 1989, they could remain silent no longer.

 "The students always to make the rule to stand on the truth," Liu had told me. "It's the only thing they can do. If workers didn't come and follow students, the movement means nothing. Everybody understands that, even Chairman Mao."

The students gave organizational expression to the underlying grievances and frustrations building in China. They articulated serious, specific political demands for more democratic rights and an end to privilege and corruption. Then they spearheaded the Tiananmen demonstrations and continued to provide the organizational leadership. But sometime during the third week of May, after over a million workers filled the square in support of the students, the pro-democracy movement faced a serious dilemma--it was politically powerless. The students had taken things as far as they could. Their courage and example had sparked the working people from Beijing to Shanghai to Chengdu, and now they had a mass movement on their hands, one that was rapidly posing the question of power: "Who rules China?"

And mass movements require conscious, disciplined leaderships aware of the stakes involved and possessing clear goals. In this epoch of imperialism and Stalinism, the working class struggle for political and economic power--communism--requires a special kind of leadership: a centralized, combat, vanguard party of class conscious Bolsheviks, that is, a Leninist party.

This is true, said Trotsky, whether you're talking about a capitalist country where a SOCIAL revolution has not yet occurred, or in a Stalinist-led workers state--countries like the Soviet Union, China, Poland, Romania, etc., where the historical task on the agenda is a POLITICAL revolution, that is, the overturning of the privileged bureaucratic caste and the establishment of socialist democracy.

Once the pro-democracy campaign took on a mass character, the question of leadership came to the fore, and that became the Beijing Spring's downfall. The students could ignite the mobilizations and provide the creative energy for the organizational leadership, but they could not sustain the movement with conscious political direction. In modern society, that kind of leadership could only be provided by the working class. Even Chairman Mao, champion of the peasant-based variant of Marxism, understood that, Wang had reminded me.

And the workers had by no means been silent or inactive. Despite laboring under the Party's extensive system of control, from the unions to the work unit, China's toilers were very quickly showing signs of taking advantage of the political openings being won by the movement, as evidenced by the rapidly growing independent unions, particularly the Autonomous Workers Federations in Beijing and Shanghai. In open defiance of the Party, workers were integrally involved in monitoring the million-strong Tiananmen mobilizations during the third week of May.

Which is why the tanks attacked the BAWF tents first in Tiananmen Square; why the workers were the ones executed after June 4th; why the harshest prison sentences were reserved for workers. What Deng and Li feared most was the potential represented by the independent federation. Deng and Company were worried that if the workers assumed leadership of the mass movement from the students, the question of who rules China--the bureaucracy or the workers--would be clearly posed.

Deng knew that there were workers in the BAWF who were well aware of the stakes involved. As the banner over the BAWF tent read, the Tiananmen movement was one for democracy, not just a student movement. "In fact, it's a democratic revolution," one of the workers told me just hours before the tanks invaded the square. "Our aim is not just to oppose corruption, not just to put down Li Peng 's government, not just to put down conservatives, but to eliminate society's problems, all these problems. Down with dictatorship."

Wang had echoed these convictions almost word for word. "Democracy for all the people, not just the students. A democratic revolution, not just to oppose corruption."

But these important developments within the Beijing Autonomous Workers Federation were a long way from providing the kind of political leadership needed. As May unfolded, the Communist Party increased the pressure on the workers, warning them to tow the line and back off from the Tiananmen protests. Though the hundreds of activists in the federation were busy trying to get the word out, this was all in its infancy. The leadership of the Beijing Spring was in the hands of an increasingly divided student movement.

There were divisions between the Beijing-based students and those from other provinces in China. The latter wanted to continue the occupation and encampment of Tiananmen Square, at least until the June 20th National People's Congress meeting, while the former favored ending the demonstrations and carrying on the pro-democracy cause in other ways. The radicals were still counting on the Zhao faction to emerge victorious in the intra-party battle with the hard-liners; they believed that Zhao had enough backing in the army to preclude an all-out assault by the troops on Tiananmen Square. If they could just hold on until June 20th, when army commanders from all over China would see for themselves the support for Zhao in the capital, the thinking went, then Deng and Li would have no choice but to back down. Besides, many of these students genuinely believed that the People's Liberation Army would never attack the students.

The Beijing students had far fewer illusions. They could see the handwriting on the wall far more clearly than their counterparts from around the country. The Tiananmen protests had run their course and proved their point, but Zhao's faction had lost the fight to Deng and the hard-liners. The game of chicken was approaching its denouement. It was time to end the occupation of the square and take the campaign for democracy to other forums. A good start was already underway--the teams of pro-democracy agitators that had begun touring China, spreading the word.

These students sensed that the people's stamina was ebbing and the relationship of forces was not as favorable as they had been even a week before. It might be difficult to repeat the May 23rd mobilization that had blocked the army's first advance on Tiananmen Square.

The erection of the Goddess of Democracy and Freedom only crystallized these arguments. The more moderate students contended that the statue gave the movement a chance to declare victory, give a final parting shot to the government, and end the Tiananmen demonstrations preserving the dignity and safety of the people. At the end of May it was reported that a final vote actually decided in favor of leaving the square, but it was never acted upon, because in the meantime the Goddess had become the catalyst for the people of Beijing to rally around. The idea that everyone should go home and the Goddess of Democracy and Freedom be handed over to the Deng government suddenly became absurd. As hundreds of thousands of Beijing's citizens filed into Tiananmen Square every night paying homage to the statue, the message was clear--the Goddess belonged to the people.

As the month of May wound down, Deng Xiaoping and Li Peng were able to politically defeat Zhao Zhang's faction and marshal support for the crackdown by saying something like this to the Party:

"Look at the paralysis and embarrassment these bourgeois democrats have caused us! How much longer can we allow this to go on? They are disgracing the honor of our nation, erecting symbols of America's bourgeois democracy on sacred ground, desecrating the memories of China's patriots. Look at where the moderate, conciliatory course urged by Comrade Zhao has gotten us. There is no end in sight; the counterrevolutionary troublemakers lurking in the background will not cease stirring up trouble. The only place it will lead will be increased turmoil to the point where it might get out of control Their goal is a capitalist republic. The Tiananmen movement must be crushed. We must be willing to pay whatever international political price this may generate. We have no alternative. It's them or us."

It took some time, for the Zhao/Hu Yaobang faction of the Communist Party had substantial strength in the Party as well as the army. As the movement reached its zenith, Party members, including prominent journalists from the People's Daily, were resigning in protest against the headline position. But as May dragged on with no end in sight to the demonstrations, the logic of Deng's arguments rang true to more and more Party bureaucrats. By the time Zhao made his tearful address to the students in Tiananmen Square on May 19th, whatever chance he had in winning the intra-party battle was lost, and he knew it. "It's too late," he told his student admirers.

Even so, as late as Saturday evening it still was't a foregone conclusion that the army was coming to violently end the pro-democracy movement. The bizarre scenes that took place at the side and rear of the Great Hall of the People just hours before the tanks arrived showed this. Standing in the middle of them, it was hard to tell if you were witnessing a confrontation or fraternization between the soldiers and the demonstrators. One minute, soldiers menacingly brandishing clubs looked like they were on the verge of charging; the next minute soldiers and protesters were singing the Internationale under a white flag. The troops ended up retreating to the victorious cheers of the people. Many in the crowd were convinced that they had won, and that once again any army advance would be repulsed.

Other demonstrators, including Wang, told me that the hundreds of thousands of soldiers based outside Beijing were not there to be deployed against the demonstrators, but were there rather as a show of force by those divisions loyal to Deng against those backing Zhao.

The soldiers who confronted the thousands of demonstrators at the Great Hall were from the Beijing-based 38th Division, known to be supportive of Zhao and more reluctant to fire on the demonstrators. The army unit which did most of the killing was the 27th Division, commanded by a son-in-law of hard-liner President Yang Shankung and consisting of ethnic minorities from China's outer provinces (who were also battle-hardened veterans of the brutal 1979 war against Vietnam). Maybe the 38 Division troops were more reluctant to fire on the people because of their close proximity to Beijing; maybe it was because Zhao enjoyed considerable support from the division's commanders. But whatever the reasons were, they did not exist for the soldiers brought in from distant ethnic provinces.

These soldiers, speaking a different dialect than the Han dialect spoken in Beijing, and falling victim to China's national divisions and chauvinism, had no trouble internalizing their commanders' propaganda directed against Beijing's demonstrators.

"Counterrevolutionaries in Beijing are threatening to overthrow the Party and restore capitalism," the top brass told the 27th. "They are paralyzing Beijing and desecrating China's national monuments. They are responsible for the chaos and turmoil. They must be stopped. Your country calls on you to save it."

Several demonstrators told me on Sunday that the 27th Division's troops had been drugged up for the massacre and were laughing as they shot people dead. This was not independently confirmed but what is clear is that the non-Han soldiers were far more calloused about slaughtering protesters than the 38th Division confronting the people at the Great Hall. From all accounts, it is clear that it was the 27th Division soldiers who did the vast majority of killing in the streets of Beijing that night.

But if the Beijing-based 38th Division was more supportive of Zhao Zhang and more reluctant to fire, it is not true that this was a reflection of the fact that the Chinese army was on the verge of civil war. There were scattered, unconfirmed reports of shooting between rival army units, and they may indeed have been based on some elements of truth. But China was never near a civil war with pro-Zhao and pro-Deng units fighting each other. The ruling bureaucratic caste was not that divided. Though it had taken Deng some time to marshal his forces and politically defeat Zhao's reformist faction, he had succeeded in convincing enough of the bureaucracy that its privileges were threatened by the continuation of the pro-democracy movement, and the Tiananmen rabble had to go.

But what about the demeanor of the 38th Division? Did their reluctance to shoot, the semi-fraternization, and their singing of the Internationale, reflect the substantial support in the army for Zhao's more moderate positions? Or was it all a ploy, designed to lure Beijing's populace into a false sense of security, to soften them up for the heavy blows coming from the 27th Division? Was it, indeed, part of the same plan that sent hundreds of unarmed soldiers jogging into Tiananmen Square the day before the massacre, a scheme purposely designed for the troops to be routed and humiliated at the hands of the demonstrators, the better to inflame the revved-up 27th Division to do the dirty work? Then there were the provocateurs, like the one caught by the mob outside the Minzu Hotel, who was freed from their grasp by the meddling American as the PLA mowed down hundreds of citizens.

As late as Saturday night there were still many Chinese who were convinced the People's Liberation Army would never fire on the people. But others, like those holding meetings all over Tiananmen Square by 10:30 pm, had no such illusions and were fully aware of the dangers ahead. "Tell the world we die for democracy and freedom, " said the young man at the Beijing Autonomous Workers Federation. Some had made a conscious decision to become martyrs and announced an unequivocal statement to the Party and the world: "You'll have to kill us to separate us from Tiananmen and the Goddess and all she stands for."

One of the biggest points of dispute concerning the June 4th crackdown was the death toll inflicted by the army. Initial estimates from the Red Cross and Western news agencies ranged anywhere from 10,000 to 20,000. Though too high, these reports had a veneer of credibility during the first week of June 1989, particularly with the lurid rumors circulating in Beijing of the soldiers burning bodies in the square and dumping others into rivers. If the initial estimates of civilian deaths were too high, the numbers put out by the Chinese government were laughable.

"Only 200 were killed the night of June 4th," said Deng and Li Peng with straight faces. "And most of them were soldiers, brave soldiers, killed by counterrevolutionary hooligans while trying to save the nation from chaos." One government report stated that only 23 students were killed in the "rioting."

A related controversy was the issue of how many citizens were killed in Tiananmen Square on June 4th. There were several early reports which claimed that the army slaughtered hundreds, perhaps thousands of people in the square alone; that the tanks crushed many tents, including BAWF's, with dozens of demonstrators still inside; that soldiers opened fire on hundreds of protesters trying to flee Tiananmen; and that soldiers used flamethrowers to burn bodies in order to camouflage fatalities.

One particular eyewitness account from the square received significant worldwide notoriety. A Chinese student gave a graphic account detailing army atrocities in Tiananmen Square reported in the Hong Kong Standard, San Francisco Examiner, New York Times and much of the international media. His account gave credence to the charges that the soldiers killed scores of people inside Tiananmen Square. But in the next few days, the student's version was widely discredited by several other individuals, independent of each other, who also claimed to be eyewitnesses to the June 4th events in the square. It was from these reports that we learned of the saga of Hou Dijian, Wang's hunger-striking friend, who emerged from his tent to lead the negotiations with the army that allowed the remaining Tiananmen demonstrators to leave the square before 5 am in almost ceremonious manner, complete with an army escort. Hou's story and others cast serious doubt on the main premise of the above-mentioned student's testimony: a wholesale massacre by the army against demonstrators fleeing Tiananmen.

The controversy raised some interesting questions. How many people were killed that night? How many in Tiananmen Square? Was the figure closer to the government's claim of 200 than the higher estimates in the tens of thousands?

If I could do one thing over again in Beijing, I would have stayed in the square that Saturday night and waited for the army to arrive. I sensed that it was the place to be for a journalist; all hell was breaking loose, and with all the controversy that followed over the killings in the square, I wished I had stayed there to see for myself.

In truth, my head was dazed and spinning by 11 pm, and I just wanted a pit stop at the Minzu for a spell, fully intending to return to Tiananmen later. But I had seen Tiananmen for the last time. There was no way of knowing that the Minzu would be the scene of one of the first battles in Beijing on June 4th; no way of knowing I'd see the first army casualties when teenage boys were dragged in to the Minzu's lobby-turned-infirmary; no way of knowing I'd be confined to the hotel watching the killings on the Avenue of Eternal Peace.

It has been difficult to pin an exact casualty figure on the June 4th massacre, given the Chinese Communist Party's tight control of such information. However, my sense of it is that the government's claim of 200 deaths, most of them soldiers, is ludicrously low, while some of the early estimates of 10 to 20,000 were overinflated. The truth probably lies somewhere in the 700 to 1200 range, with those wounded numbering in the thousands. This estimate is based on my own limited eyewitness observations from my hotel room, conversations with Chinese the next day, and piecing together the most credible accounts that have emerged.

While confined to my room I witnessed a portion of the June 4th massacre. Although my vista point did not front Changan Avenue, I was still able to see a small strip of the street, scene of many of the fatalities. From about 1:30 until 5:30 am, I personally witnessed several dozen citizens gunned down in the street by soldiers atop the tanks rumbling down Changan on their way to Tiananmen Square. That was just a very small slice of the terrifying violence unleashed by the army during the overnight. There was constant gunfire in and around Changan all night long; I heard the immediate gunfire from the action near the Minzu and more distant shots emanating from the square. I saw many people picking up limp bodies and placing them on their carts before carrying them off the main drag.

Not having stayed in Tiananmen, I am not able to offer any eyewitness testimony on the events there or shed any light on the debate over how many were citizens were killed in the square. Nicholas Kristof, then the China correspondent for the New York Times, wrote that contrary to that Chinese student's claims of mass killings in the square, most of the casualties occurred in the fierce street fighting surrounding Tiananmen. Kristof pointed as evidence to the army's escort of the Hou Dijian-led procession of students out of Tiananmen at 5:30 am.

While I agree with Kristof's central point that the majority of people killed by the army were felled in the street fighting, that does not mean there were no killings in the square. Tiananmen is an extremely large area, the size of 7 to 10 Times Squares, and no single eyewitness account can cover all the events that transpired in the square that night. It seems certain that at least several dozen students and workers were killed in Tiananmen. There were too many reports of tanks crushing tents, including BAWF's and at least of some soldiers firing at individuals trying to flee the square.

But the orderly retreat from Tiananmen led by Hou Dijian showed that there was no single, uniform, conscious decision by the army to physically eliminate the entire Tiananmen population. Even when the attack was carried out, things were not that disciplined and organized. Kristof is correct--the majority of the 700 to 1200 people killed by the army were gunned down in street battles like the one outside the Minzu Hotel.

"The Chinese people are highly miserableized," one man said as we waded through the battle debris strewn across Changan Avenue. Unforgettable is the sheer terror in the faces of Beijing's people that Sunday afternoon; the sickening pall hovering over the city; the face of death; the look of shock on their faces as they realized that "their" army, the PLA, had murdered its own children in the streets; the sinking realization that the government was "them" as opposed to the people, "us"; that the Communist Party, so long admired for how it fought the Japanese and its role in winning national independence, did not belong to the people, that it represented "them," the bureaucracy.

And the terror which filled the people's hearts did not stem from any "counterrevolutionary thugs," as the government falsely claimed; the people of Beijing had become terrified of their own government. Many lessons were no doubt absorbed by many Chinese, especially those veterans of the autonomous workers union who learned that what the working people of China needed was a new party, their party, a party of the working class, because the Communist Party was not theirs, but an instrument of privilege for the bureaucracy. The time had passed for reforming the Party; a new one would have to be built.

But what about the Chinese government's assertion that most of the fatalities were soldiers killed by counterrevolutionary thugs? The Communist Party leadership claimed that the brave soldiers trying to restore order in Beijing and prevent a capitalist restoration were besieged by the troublemakers who were running about Beijing, the ruffians who stole weapons and fired upon soldiers and attacked tanks with firebombs. There was indeed film footage showing crowds of citizens in Tiananmen Square throwing bricks at tanks and setting one on fire.

First, the violence that occurred in Beijing in June 4th was initiated by the rampaging army; any violence by the people was reactive and defensive in nature. Those individuals who attacked the tanks in the square reacted with rage to the murderous onslaught already unleashed by the army. There had been no violence committed by any demonstrators during the entire Beijing Spring; the mobilizations in Tiananmen, while militant, were peaceful and pacifist, carried out by an entirely unarmed populace.

The government's propaganda quickly churned out the lie that rioters had shot at soldiers with stolen guns, but the word around Changan Avenue on Sunday was that soldiers had purposely left behind weapons, either to frame up students or in sympathy with them, and that the guns were missing parts or otherwise defective. One student said that the students had seen through the "trick," and refused the weapons. On late Saturday afternoon, and again later that night behind the Great Hall of the People, I saw some of those rifles, which looked as if they had missing parts, resting against the lean-tos atop the "liberated buses." There may have been a few isolated incidents of citizens firing shots, and reports of sniper fire persisted for several days after the crackdown, but the overwhelming majority of gunfire came from soldiers shooting down workers and students in the streets near the square.

The ordinary people do not have access to guns in China. Wang and Liu confirmed that when I asked them about it. "Tell the USA we need guns," one man desperately said on Changan Avenue Sunday morning. It is true, however, that Beijing's working people put up much resistance to the army's firepower.

One of the last images from that night in Beijing is the sight of many hundreds of demonstrators running after the last of the tanks on their way to occupy Tiananmen Square. This was no vanquished, demoralized populace that would roll over. Consequently, the army did suffer some casualties of its own. The young soldiers who were brought into the Minzu's lobby with their heads smashed from bricks were no doubt some of the army's earliest casualties that evening. Much of the trouble in the streets was no doubt caused by the many agent provocateurs running amok in Beijing, like the one outside the Minzu who faced the wrath of the people after his identity was revealed.

By far the most graphic illustration of the people's resistance to the army's attack was the burned corpse of the soldier, helmet in hand, hanging from a bus in the middle of the intersection three blocks from the square on Sunday morning. But even this horrible violence was not unprovoked, for this was the soldier who was pulled from the tank by an angry crowd after the tank had crushed 11 people trying to scale a wall while attempting to flee from the tank's path.

Though there were indeed some army casualties on June 4th, the Chinese government's figures of 200 to 300 dead are no doubt inflated. But the responsibility for all the violence, dead and wounded, rests with the senior leadership of the Communist Party. There may very well have been troublemakers, ruffians, and transients running about, taking advantage of the conflict to cause some trouble of their own. We know there were agent provocateurs instigating trouble; and there were angry, frustrated demonstrators who lashed back at the army with whatever weapons they could construct in response to the murderous onslaught down the Avenue of Eternal Peace. But it is ludicrous to suggest, as the government does, that Beijing's and the nation's safety was threatened by riotous counterrevolutionaries; that the army was only defending itself and trying to restore order. The people were unarmed, and peacefully if militantly assembling for a redress of their grievances. It was the army that killed many hundreds of citizens.

**Chapter 11: Conclusion**

When the China Air flight carrying some of the first Americans to escape the Tiananmen crackdown arrived at San Francisco International Airport, the news media was waiting to greet us in full force. A barrage of camera lights, reporters and microphones greeted me when I emerged from Customs. For the next several days, a group of Bay Area college students and I appeared on one TV talk show after another—WABC Eyewitness News, WCBS’s Bay Sunday talk show, and CNN’s Live with Sonya.

All the interviewers were interested in was if we had eyewitnessed any of the gore in Beijing. I did manage to slip into the conclusion of my interview with ABC News anchorperson Pete Wilson that the pro-democracy movement sought only to reform the Communist Party and make socialism work better, not to replace it with capitalism. With Bay Sunday’s Barbara Rogers, I had to be a little more blunt.

Rogers: “Will you go back, Nivek?”

Me: “I think I’ll wait a little while until things calm down a bit. I just want to say that I saw on the front page today that Deng Xiaoping accused the leaders of the pro-democracy movement of calling for the overthrow of communism, of the socialist system in China and for the establishment of a capitalist republic. That is an out and out lie; there’s not a shred of evidence of that anywhere. Student after student, worker after worker that I spoke to in the square and around the city, emphatically stressed that their goal was to radically reform the Communist Party, but not to overthrow socialism; that they wanted the Party to work better, make it more democratic, more responsive, and they were directing their fire against a bureaucatic clique of misleaders, who are a bunch of liars right now, because to say that just does not square with any of the facts that I saw.”

 From there it was on to the radio airwaves and the Alex Bennett show, a popular morning talk program. I remembered Alex as a New York radio personality in the early ‘70s, a likeable chap who always reminded me a little of rock guitarist Frank Zappa. We had a thoroughly engaging, lively discussion, punctuated with the usual Bennett sardonic humor. But the best part for me was that I hadno trouble communicating the theme that socialism and democracy are not incompatible and that there was still strong support for socialism in China. Alex said it all for me, on his own.

 But by far the most rewarding discussion on the Beijing events took place at the Clifford Elementary School in Redwood City, California. My wife, who was a teacher there, asked me to speak to an assembly of 5th and 6th graders on what I saw. The children seemed fascinated by the Chinese students’ fight for democracy and were extremely knowledgeable on the latest news from Beijing, due in part to their teacher’s briefing. By now, the Clifford students along with the rest of the world had been mesmerized and inspired by the young man who had challenged a tank in the middle of the Avenue of Eternal Peace. The events in Beijing were so titanic and emotional that they overshadowed two other international news stories which by themselves would have commanded the world’s attention: the death and funeral of Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran and the overwhelming electoral victory of Solidarity in Poland.

 Those 5th and 6th graders asked more political, meaningful questions about China than all the journalists I’d spoken to that week.

 “Why doesn’t the government allow the people freedom? Why did the army shoot the students?” It was at this point when I was struck by the tactical brilliance of the Chinese students when they articulated their demands in English and turned their struggle into a focus of the international media. They were able to talk directly with young people in Redwood City, California, who understood what they were saying a good deal more than those U.S. diplomats at the embassy briefing, not to mention most of the bourgeois journalists.

 With such a large concentration of Chinese students in the Bay Area, it was no surprise to find many solidarity activities and protests against the Tiananmen massacre being organized on such campuses as Berkeley, San Francisco State and Stanford the week of June 5th. The actions culminated in a June 10th Memorial Vigil held in San Francisco’s Civic Center Plaza, organized by a coalition of Bay Area Chinese student organizations. One of the vigil’s organizers, having seen my television appearances, invited me to speak on the program.

 Over 5,000 showed up that night, filling the Civil Center Plaza located in front of San Francisco’s domed City Hall. The vast majority were young Chinese students, whose mood was understandably angry. When I arrived, the vigil organizer said that due to the last minute influx of politicians and celebrities itching to appear on the program, there was no room left for me on the agenda.

 My reaction was less than passive. “What? Oh sure, keep the communist from speaking. Make room for all the politicians looking to gain political capital from the massacre. Were they in Tiananmen Square? I have a right to speak, and the students who came here have a right to hear what I have to say!”

 They somehow managed to squeeze me in at the very end of the evening’s program, which turned out to be a string of dull speeches by opportunistic politicians like Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi and former Mayor Dianne Feinstein. Not a single speak had anything meaningful to say about what had occurred in Beijing; instead, the crowd was subjected to an endless succession of depressing handwringing that bemoaned the massacre, lacking any political perspective except for demagogic anticommunist propaganda which only distorted the meaning of the Beijing Spring. The only point on the program that excited the crowd was the appearance of two Chinese diplomats who announced their defections in response to the crackdown.

 The audience seemed restless for someone to say something political about Tiananmen. It was up to the American worker in Tiananmen Square to do that. I began by saluting the courage of the Chinese people while extending solidarity to them and strong support for their fight for democratic rights while condemning the government’s brutal repression, to the cheers of the assembly. It was as if the audience was waiting for someone to take off the gloves and condemn the White House for its unusually lenient attitude toward “communist totalitarianism.” The response grew even more enthusiastic when I stated that the people I had spoken with said they were proud of socialism’s accomplishments and only wanted to reform the Communist Party, not overthrow it.

 When I pointed out Washington’s hypocrisy in opposing sanctions against Beijing while imposing them on the Nicaraguan people, the students rose to their feet cheering. The ovation continued when I condemned the atrocious human rights record of the U.S. from Vietnam to El Salvador and confidently predicted the day when the international working class would join hands and forever end all forms of violence, tyranny and exploitation.

 As I left the podium, a large Chinese man walked up to me and said threateningly, “You don’t know what you’re talking about. Mao was a great man. You shouldn’t talk about what you know nothing about.” This individual was no doubt a hard core Maoist/Stalinist who was violently opposed to the pro-capitalist roader, Deng Xiaoping, but who was no friend of an antiStalinist, Trotskyist type.

 A few days later I received a crank call from a decidedly anticommunist who also didn’t like what I said at the vigil.

 The response of the largely student crowd was particularly intriguing in light of the hostile reaction to Senator Patrick Moynihan at a similar event in New York City just a few days earlier. Moynihan was roundly booed for supporting Bush’s hands-off policy on sanctions, while a socialist who also opposed sanctions (for they would only punish China’s working people; socialist support sanctions only when they are demanded by an oppressed people, such as South Africa’s Blacks or the Haitians) was cheered for condemning Washington’s hypocritical double standard in applying them.

Back in China, the physical crushing of the pro-democracy movement in Beijing broke the back of the campaign in the rest of the country. The dying embers of the movement flared for a last hurrah in Shanghai j ust days after the crackdown when the train ran over six demonstrators, but all intents and purposes, the struggle for democracy in 1989 was over.

The next few months saw the government conduct a mopping up operation consisting of show trials, massive roundups and arrests, and the 37 reported exectuions. Some student leaders managed to escape; others were arrested, some after being turned in by citizens. Wuer Xaxi fled the country; Wang Dan was not so lucky. Many workers lost their jobs for their involvement in the pro-democracy demonstrations.

An August 13th Reuters dispatch from Beijing reported that the peasant leader of a secret organization known as the Great East Asia Buddhist Society had been sentenced to death on August 4th for counterrevolutionary activities. It was not known if his activities were related to the Tiananmen protests. I wondered if this might have been the same Buddhist monk who gave such a spirited message of support in Tiananmen Square the Tuesday night I met Wang and Liu.

Fear and loathing permeated Beijing during the post-Tiananmen summer of 1989. The army’s continued occupation of Tiananmen Square and the rest of the city gave the people a clear message that martial law was still around. Yet there was another side of reality that reflected the complex relationship of forces in China—the absence of a large-scale purge in the Communist Party. One the one hand, Deng was blaming the entire economic mess and the Tiananmen demonstrations on party chief Zhao Zhang; on the other hand, the worst punishment Zhao received was his removal from all party positions. He didn’t lose his party membership—fairly lenient treatment for the person single-handedly reponsible for bringing China to the brink of ruin, not to mention the restoration of capitalism.

For the most part, the Zhao faction remained intact, albeit at a far less visible and active level. The Communist Party leadership went after the pro-democracy campaign’s leaders and activists hard, but there were no mass purges against the Zhao forces. Zhao’s reformist wing was forced to lay low and wait for Deng’s death before making another move.

Meanwhile, the hardliners were doing their best to shore up their position. Having crushed the pro-democracy movement and its nascent independent labor union, the Party stepped up its ideological campaign to root out all bourgeois influences to make damn sure Tiananmen Square would never happen again. All the problems had been caused by Zhao and his policies embracing private enterprise. Down with capitalism; up with socialism, which had been saved by the Communist Party. The government made it mandatory for all college students to attend reeducation camps in the outer provinces in order to be ideologically rerooted in Marxism and communism. And the incoming class at Beijing University was substantially reduced, a move universally seen as a punishment for the school’s active participation in the pro-democracy fight.

 The Party couldn’t reverse the deteriorating economic situation; austerity was still the name of the game. Workers were hit with increased taxes; inflation was still high and living standards remained low. But the situation wasn’t a total disaster, and some layers of the peasantry were still doing fairly well. While the Party’s prestige and authority were severely tarnished in Beijing and Shanghai, the further out you went in rural China the more support Beijing enjoyed. Many peasants far removed from the urban centers of the pro-democracy campaign tended to believe the government’s version of the June 4th “disturbances.” Some peasants who hadn’t benefited much from Deng’s pro-capitalist tilt didn’t mind the government reversal at all. “We should go back to Mao,” said one peasant.

In the pro-democracy hotbeds of Beijing and Shanghai, the workers were laying low. The movement was definitively crushed; the people’s morale and confidence had been shattered by the sheer brutality of the crackdown. For the worker militants and the pro-democracy activists it was time to go undergound, since the relationship of forces would preclude any visible activity for some time to come. The students were largely quiet, with the exception of a small but courageous protest at Beijing University.

Reports began filtering out of China of an underground network of worker militants and democracy activists communicating by means of mimeographed bulletins. One group was called the Democratic Front for the Salvation of China, consisting of approximately 100 activists around thecountry who were targeting intellectuals and workers. The group’s goal was the end of the Communist Party’s monopoly of power and the establishment of a multiparty system.

 But these fighters were not the only ones struggling tokeep the pro-democracy message alive. Over the summer, a small group of Chinese exiles organized the Front for Democratic China and went on a multination tour to drum up money and support. The front had some luminaries in its midst, including Wuer Xaxi, the charismatic, enigmatic student leader from Tiananmen Square; Yan Jiaqi, Communist Party member, intellectual and key aide to Zhao Zhang; and Wan Runnan, a 43-year-old businessman and head of the Stone Corporation, the computer company and think tank that had close ties to Zhao. They announced at the end of July that the official kickoff of the Front wold not be until September 23rd in Paris. But in the meantime, the three leaders were going on an international speaking tour to drum up support for their pro-democracy movement in exile.

In the first week of August the trio arrived with much fanfare in San Francisco. Wuer, truly the Boy Wonder of the Tiananmen student protests, came already embroiled in controversy. He was developing a reputation for being quite the ladies’ man as well as feigning illness at public engagements. Wan Runnan was an interesting character and a very profitable byproduct of Deng’s pro-capitalist turn. His Stone Corporation computer firm had made millions in profits, which Wan used quite freely to finance the Tiananmen campaign. He was soon to be accused of counterrevolutionary treason bythe government and sentenced to death. His unforgiveable crime was calling for an emergency session of the National People’s Congress to debate the government’s handling of the turmoil.

I went to the morning press conference at the Grand Hyatt Regency Hotel, attended by several dozen reporters, Chinese students, and members of the Bay Area China lobby. Wuer was fairly impressive at this conference. He presented himself as an intelligent, articulate young man, with no shortage of charisma. He certainly earned some respect for his role in the Tiananmen demonstrations, although questions had surfaced about him even then.

Wuer said that the reason why the students’ movement won so much international support was its nonviolent character. Someone asked him what advice hehad for the people of Beijing still living under fierce repression and martial law. Wuer replied he had no specific advice for the people, other than to stay in Beijing and wait for the day when the government ends martial law. The unsatisfied reporter repeated the question. Wuer skillfully evaded it again, saying it was important to look at the big picture instead of small incidents.

 Wuer raised some eyebrows in the room when, in response to a question about human rights, he went out of his way to accuse President Bush of having double standards when it comes to human rights. Someone asked him what he thought of the planned Goddess of Democracy and Freedom to be erected in San Francisco’s Chinatown. Wuer thought it was a good idea. He said that the Goddess was the symbol of China’s pro-democracy aspirations, and that the goal of the Chinese people was to build it again someday in Tiananmen Square.

One reporter asked Wuer what people around the world could do for the Front for Democratic China. He responded by saying they could urge that sanctions be imposed on Beijing’s regime. It was then I stood up and addressed the group.

“It was my impression after spending the last 10 days in Beijing before June 4th that contrary to Deng’s assertion, most people were not calling for the overthrow of the Communist Party or even socialism; they merely wanted a dialogue and meaningful reform to make the system better.”

As my remarks were being translated to the podium, Wuer’s face brightened as he nodded in agreement. Yan Jiaqi added that one-party rule in China could no longer work. He said the front’s purpose was to build an “independent political force outside the communist regime” that would achieve “peaceful, nonviolent, rational change. The purpose of the Front is to promote pluralism in China, not to overthrow the government or the Communist Party. We believe that the Communist Party and the KMT have a right to exist.”

Wan Runnan, however, seemed visibly uncomfortable with the theme of my comments. He said that the people wanted democracy and multiparties, but that the Communist Party was the source of all the troubles because it blocked meaningful economic reform and private enterprise.

It was a theme that Wan developed in greater detail during his speech at the Front’s big event at the Grand Hyatt that evening. The widely-publicized rally drew a large crowd of over 1,000, many of them Chinese students. There was a great deal of electricity in the Grand Ballroom over the appearance by the Front’s leaders, especially for Wuer, the star of Tiananmen Square. A six-foot replica of the Goddess of Democracy and Freedom served as a fitting backdrop for the Front’s public rally.

As Secretary General of the Front, Wan gave the major address of the evening. He wasted no time, and he minced no words. According to him, the key thing that stood in the way of all further reform in China was the question of private ownership of the means of production. The economic reforms of the past 10 years inevitably generated the desire for political reform, liberalization and pluralism. Capitalism brings democracy. What was missing in China was a large middle class. Only an expanding middle class could guarantee democracy in China. The more capitalism is brought to China, the more democracy its people will enjoy.

Wan freely admitted to donating a substantial amount of money to the pro-democracy movement, as well as agitating strongly for the emergency convocation of the National People’s Congress to force a showdown between Zhao and Deng. But to listen to him, you’d never know that over a million working people, including those in uniform fraternizing with the masses, had mobilized in the streets for democratic rights. According to Wan, the movement was all due to him and his money. It failed because the middle class wasn’t big enough, and there wasn’t enough free enterprise.

In the middle of Wan’s talk, Wuer Xaxi lived up fully to his reputation. He took sick and carried on, temporarily disrupting Wan’s presentation. After Wuer’s dramatic departure, Wan took the gloves off and got to the heart of the matter. Above everything else, the central obstacle to democracy and freedom in China was the nationalized property and the planned economy. In order for China to enjoy democracy, there must be private ownership of the means of production. Deng’s 10-year flirtation with the free market had wet the people’s appetite for democracy. According to Wan, his financial backing of the movement was the sole reason for its existence. The problem was there were not enough enterprising Wans to lead China down the road to freedom. There wasn’t enough capitalism; there wasn’t a large enough middle class. That’s why the movement fell short.

I could hear Deng Xiaoping howling with satisfaction back in Beijing when he heard about Wan Runnan’s remarks in San Francisco.

“You see,” he would tell the Party. “This proves we were right in crushing the disturbances. This man was the ringleader; the Mr. Moneybags financing the counterrevolutionary turmoil in Tiananmen Square. Now he is openly admitting his treason. He calls for the restoration of capitalism, for the private ownership of the means of production. Surely we were right; surely the people know that we were only defending socialism.”

But just as Deng and Li Peng were not defending socialism, Wan Runnan was not the great warrior for democracy he made himself out to be. As for his theory that the middle class is the major force behind the fight for democracy and freedom in the world, he’s only about 130 to 200 years behind the times. That period was the last time capitalism played a revolutionary, progressive, democratic role in history. The ascending “middle classes” waged struggles against the tyrannical feudal landlords, nobility and monarchs for greater freedoms and rights, in order for it to be easier to exploit “free” wage labor and make money the way capitalists do.

Marxists have never denied the historically progressive role the capitalists played in overturning feudalism, thereby paving the way for humanity to organize production on a higher plane as well as enabling the toilers to have more political space to fight for and defend their rights. But even then it was the more plebian layers who fought the hardest for extending democratic rights and civil liberties. And it was the propertied classes who resisted these struggles and sought to restrict any expansion of political rights and freedoms. In the years following the American Revolution,it was the militant struggles waged by the masses, by the workers and farmers, which pressured the new American government to add the Bill of Rights to the Constitution, a full ten years after the Revolution.

Capitalists played a progressive historical role when they were a young, ascending, revolutionary class. But by the late 20th century, the epoch of capitalism in itsmost advanced stage—finance capitalism, that is, imperialism—capitalism has become increasingly incompatible with democracy. It is an empire in decline, in crisis, and historically spent, but still extremely dangerous. Capitalists all over the world engage in varying degress of repression to safeguard their profits and interests and are opposed to any extensions of democratic rights. Today, more than ever, it is the working people who are in the forefront of the fight for democracy, from the United States to China.

All of which is not to say the financial contributions of Wan Runnan and others like him to the pro-democracy movement did not play an important role. But listening to Wan reminded me of those American diplomats at the embassy briefing. He too completely dismissed the central role played by working people in forging the mass movement that became known as the Beijing Spring. Deng Xiaoping and Li Peng feared China’s working class far more than ambitious enterpreneurs like Wan Runnan.

What really bothered Wan and other budding bourgeois elements in China was not the lack of democratic rights but the fact that the bureaucracy was not sharing enough of free enterprise’s spoils. With the rampant corruption and nepotism permeating China, the party chiefs were hogging the booty that was the fruit of Deng’s pro-capitalist turn. All the juicy contracts and deals were going to army officers and party bureaucrats and their children. Wan had concluded that the only way around this was to end the Communist Party monopoly and reprivatize the commanding heights of the economy.

Wan’s badly flawed, historically outdated theory about democracy and capitalism fared about as well as his Front for a Democratic China. This traveling sideshow of exiles made a big splash in San Francisco, Chicago and New York before returning to its “headquarters” in Paris. After that it prettymuch disintegrated, beset with internal conflicts, egoism, and disagreements over political perspective as well as the meaning of Tiananmen itself. Wan’s theory is about as politically relevant as the Front for a Democratic China, which has passed from the scene into the trashbin of history without anyone noticing.

This trio of dilettantes will have nothing to do with and very little to say about the future struggle in China for democratic rights. That historic development will be accomplished by the Chinese working class. These are the Chinese who will count in the future and lead the fight for socialist democracy in that country. It will be those who remain in China, far from the press conferences and glare from the cameras of the international media, who the world will hear from again; the layers of fighters who are drawing the central lesson from the Tiananmen movement—that the Communist Party does not belong to the workers but to the bureaucracy and cannot be reformed; that a new workers party will have to be built to lead China forward to socialist democracy.

But isn’t it true, one might argue, that given Wan Runnan’s candid admission that private property was the answer, and given further the crumbling of “communism” in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, that communists in the world should endorse the June 4th crackdown ordered by Deng? Wasn’t he forced to call on the army to save socialism in China? If Deng didn’t forcibly end the occupation in the square, wasn’t China on the road to what happened in Romania in December of that year? Remember the “Death to Deng” sign? Didn’t June 4 prevent what happened throughout most of the rest of the communist world, excepting Cuba, North Korea and to a lesser extent, Vietnam?

No. What the crackdown “saved” in China was Stalinism for a while longer, although it only postponed the inevitable. Eastern European and Soviet Stalinism fell sooner and at a more rapid pace than China because of certain historical reasons and a different relationship of forces. The crisis of the privileged caste in China was not as acute as it was in the Soviet bloc. But June 1989 showed a serious weakness in the Chinese Communist Party. It weathered the storm of the Beijing Spring, which was only the opening salvo in what will eventually become a political revolution, in the sense Leon Trotsky defined it in The Revolution Betrayed: where the working class overthrow the totalitarian rule of the bureaucracy and become masters of their own destiny.

But Trotsky predicted this in the 1930s, when a Marxist current still existed and communist continuity in the Soviet Union had not yet been broken. A communist-led political revolution was still foreseeable. But this was not, and could not be, on the historical agenda in 1989, and it won’t be in the near future in China, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, because there is no working class vanguard yet in any of those countries. New communist organizations will reemerge only through deepening class struggle experience and as part of a broader advance of the world revolution.

Given these conditions, it was inevitable that the Stalinist regimes would not be overthrown by a communist-led political revolution, as Trotsky had foreseen, but would instead be toppled by the masses in the midst of a deep crisis, as almost occurred in China in 1989 and did happen in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. What is on the agenda today with the collapse of the Stalinist regimes is not a political revolution, but the chance for workers to win political space and exercise those rights won by working people during bourgeois democratic revolutions.

The Stalinist-led Communist Parties of China, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union have and had nothing to do with communism and revolutionary Marxism. The fact that parties may call themselves communist does not mean that they are. One must examine the programs, policies and actions of political parties to ascertain the class interests they represent. Communists represent the interests of the working class.

Stalinism has represented a privileged bureaucratic caste with interests separate and apart from the workers. But the Stalinists are not “capitalists” either; they’renot, as some have claimed, some new kind of bureaucratic capitalist class. They don’t own banks or industries, either as individuals or collectively. Instead, they are a petty bourgeois caste, a parasitic strata that has no independent role to play in the nation’s economy but feeds off the socialist property forms—the nationalization of the commanding heights of industry, a state monopoly of foreign trade, and an economy that operates according to an overall social plan. [Trotsky’s analogy: Stalinists are to workers states what trade union bureaucrats are to unions]

Trotsky explained that the origins of Stalinism began in the Soviet Union during the 1920s. Following the 1917 October Revolution, the Bolsheviks organized and mobilized the workers and peasants to expropriate and nationalize the capitalists and landlords that had ruled Russia. Capitalism was overturned; socialist property relations were established, and the Soviet Union had definitively broken from the capitalist orbit.

But tremendous pressures followed, and after the imperialist-led civil war and the failure of any extensions of socialist revolutions to the advanced capitalist countries, a privileged, bureaucratic caste emerged that reversed the domestic and international policies of the Lenin-led Communist International. This caste, led by Joseph Stalin, smashed workers democracy, dismantled the soviets (workers councils), liquidated the generation of Lenin’s collaborators, brutally collectivized agriculture, propped up the rich peasants,or kulaks, and ended Lenin’s communist course that guaranteed the right of national self-determination to the oppressed workers and peasants in the tsarist prisonhouse ofnations, the legacy of which history witnessed in 1991 with the accelerated disintegration of the Soviet Union and later in that same decade of Yugoslavia.

All of this amounted to a political counterrevolution, Trotsky explained. Replacing the internationalist, revolutionary perspective that fought to advance the class interests of the toilers—the urban workers and their allies in the countryside—the emerging bureaucracy was counterrevolutionary, retreating from Lenin’s internationalist policies to pursue a more conservative, nationalist road, designed to protect the privileges the bureaucrats were accruing.

This reactionary direction carried over into Stalin’s foreign policy, resulting in two disastrous outcomes: the disarming of communist forces in China and their butchering at the hands of Chang Kai shek’s Nationalist army; and the German Communist Party (under Stalin’s direction) refusing to support the German Social Democrats, thus allowing Hitler to waltz into power.

Stalin said the Soviet people would build “socialism in one country” under his leadership. Trotsky, as part of the Left Opposition in the Soviet Union and later from exile in Mexico, said that was impossible, especially in a backward, peasant country such as the Soviet Union. He pointed out that, as Lenin always said, there could not be socialism until the workers in the advanced capitalist nations made socialist revolutions.

What existed in the former Soviet Union was not socialism but a workers state—a transitional, contradictory society in transition from capitalism to socialism, as part of the world struggle against capitalist exploitation. A workers state can go forward to socialism, or backward toward capitalist restoration. The October Revolution had indeed overturned capitalism when it nationalized industries, established a planned economy and a state monopoly of foreign trade. All this laid the foundation for building socialism. When the internationalist socialist revolution did not occur and the Soviet Union remained impoverished and isolated, the Stalin-led bureaucracy ruthlessly carried out the political counterrevolution. But while the Stalinists weakened the workers state with their reactionary politics, they did not succeed in overturning the social conquests of the October Revolution.

It was a contradictory situation which Trotsky felt could not last very long. Either the imperialists would militarily overturn the workers state and restore capitalism, or a layer of the caste would try reinstitute capitalism. This could not happen, however, without taking on the Soviet workers and inflicting a crushing defeat on them in a civil war. Either way, Trotsky did not have much confidence in the Stalinists’ capacity to defend the workers state. It would be up to the Soviet working class to defend the state property relations. “The social revolution, betrayed by the ruling party,” he explained in 1936, “still exists in property relations and in the consciousness of the toiling masses” (The Revolution Betrayed, p. 255).

The Soviet Stalinists lasted a while longer than Trotsky thought they would, thanks in large part to the Soviet workers’ defeat of German imperialism in World War II. They were able to do this despite Stalin’s leadership, not because of it. The victory gave prestige to the Soviets throughout the semicolonial world. Capitalism, significantly weakened by the war, was overturned in Eastern Europe, but through predominantly administrative, bureaucratic and military means. This was less so in Yugoslavia, where there had been an active, militant, partisan guerrilla movement fighting the Nazis. The Communist parties became the instruments of the new castes’ political domination, and police state terror became the mechanism of their rule.

Trotsky, murdered by an agent of Stalin in Mexico in 1940, never lived to see these events. But the methodology of his analysis of the Soviet Union’s “revolution betrayed” could be applied to the overturning of capitalism in Eastern Europe. If the workers revoltuion in the Soviet Union had degenerated with the ascension to power of the bureaucrats, the workers states in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, East Germany, etc., were bureaucratically deformed from birth.

Nevertheless, capitalism had been toppled in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union emerged stronger from the war than the imperialists in Washington and elsewhere desired. The Cold War was imposed by the imperialists after World War II because of their inability to realize by means of a hot war, a shooting war, their goal of restoring capitalism in the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Bloc. This was partly due to the overt opposition by U.S. GIs to being used as cannon fodder in Eastern Europe or China.

Washington’s failure to achieve its aims in the Korean War was another indication of the limits of its military power. Instead of stopping the overturning of capitalism in Korea and China, the war intensified the deepening of the anticapitalist revolution in both nations. The communist parties in these countries, as well as in Vietnam shortly after, led socialist revolutions despite their Stalinist leaderships.

But these Stalinist parties were qualitatively different from the Soviet Union’s Communist Party. Korea, Vietnam and China had revolutionary conditions ruthlessly imposed on them by imperialist interventions. The toilers in these countries fought tenaciously for their national sovereignties and independence from foreign domination. The fact that they were saddled with Stalinist leaderships did not stop them from defending their nations and overturning capitalism.

Mao Zedong was a revolutionary and an anti-imperalist, but he was schooled in the Stalinist perversion of communism. When he came to power in 1949, his Stalinist background came to the fore. Despite the sometimes vitriolic rhetoric against U.S. imperialism, Mao sought stable relations with Washington as much as Stalin did. And domestically, Mao’s leadership represented the interests of China’s counterrevolutionary caste which crystallized quickly when the officer corps of the People’s Liberation Army fused with the Party’s officialdom. Mao’s policies, from the “Great Leap Forward” in 1958-59 to the Proletarian Cultural Revolution in the 1960s, shared Stalinism’s most fundamental trait—a bureacratic approach that views working people as objects to be controlled, not as makers of their own history.

The Great Leap Forward was Mao’s frenzied, administrative attempt to transform China overnight from a peasant, agricultural society to a superindustrialized power. In the years preceding the Leap Forward, the Party imposed forced collectivization on the peasantry, reversing the Revolutions’ earlier policy of encouraging the formation of cooperatives. When the Great Leap Forward was leaping toward economic disaster, the government shifted gears again. Party leaders Deng Xiaoping and Liu Shao-chi urged greater reliance on private farming and increased emphasis on the use of material incentives such as bonuses to persuade workers to produce more, instead of frenetic administrative drives to squeeze more out of the workforce.

 “The Great Proleterian Cultural Revolution” was essentially Mao’s unleashing a reactionary campaign of terror to remove Deng and Liu from power and establish himself as the sole, unchallenged arbiter of the ruling bureaucratic caste in China, as Stalin had done before him. The Chinese Communists have zigged and zagged all over the place, sometimes hellbent on forced collectivization, other times relying more on market mechanisms and material incentives, all behind the backs and over the working people.

The counterrevolutionary bureaucracies in China, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union cultivated stable relations with imperialism. They aided revolutionary struggles on to the extent necessary for their own defense and diplomatic leverage. They broke the revolutionary continuity of the workers movement in those nations, demobilized and demoralized the workers, turned them away from internationalism and isolated them from struggles by workers and peasants around the world.

Stalin sold out the Spanish and Greek revolutions in the 1930s and 1940s; Mao did the same to the Indonesians in 1965. Breshnev and Mao clinked glasses of champagne with Nixon while Washington rained terror and destruction on Vietnam. This was the Cold War—a standoff between the imperialists and the counterrevolutionary castes governing the workers states. The bureaucrats sought to collaborate and make deals with the imperalists, who in turn used the castes to get to the workers. It all worked fairly well for the imperalists, who reaped great benefits from the Stalinists’ blackening the name of socialism in the eyes of working peole with their totalitarian repression.

But continued instability in the bourgeois semicolonial world produced a socialist revolution right under the nose of U.S. imperialism—Cuba. The real bad news for Washington was that for the first time since October 1917, a nonStalinist leadership successfully ld the workers and peasants in an anticapitalist revolution. Here was a genuinely revolutionary leadership that couldn’t be bought off. The crazy, bearded Fidel could not be bribed into making deals at the expense of the workers.

It was a revolution that matured by deepening the revolution inside Cuba and not shirking from providing internationalist aid to anti-imperialist struggles around the world. Far from representing the interests of a bureaucratic caste, Fidel consciously fought bureaucratism and built a communist party that, unlike its counterparts in China, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, was not an instrument for the distribution of privileges, but a communist vanguard of the working class, organizing and mobilizing them to run society in their interests, develop communist consciousness and build socialism. For this, Cuban earned Washington’s undying hatred and endured economic embargoes, assassination attempts, biological warfare, military invasions and unrelenting political pressure.

Like anyone else in this world, the Cuban Communists have flaws and made mistakes along the way. And there were undeniably some concessions made to the Kremlin, which were inevitable given Cuba’s heavy reliance on the strongest workers state. But all in all, the evolution of the Cuban Communist Party went a long way toward reknitting revolutionary continuity with the Bolsheviks and Lenin’s Communist International. And Washington knows it.

The years 1989-1990 marked a turning point in history, but not for the reasons intended by the imperialists. According to the pro-capitalist ideologues, they signaled the fatal weakening of communism. After all, didn’t communism completely collapse in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union? And didn’t communism almost fall in China? Didn’t Deng Xiaoping come very close to the fate of Rumanian dictator Ceausescu?

It became the new national party line: Communism is dead. The entire world is rushing to free enterprise and “democracy.” The Cold War is over. America and democracy have won. Long live capitalism.

One aspect of this national party line is absolutely correct. The Cold War is indeed over. The only problem for the imperialists is—the United States lost. What we are witnessing is not a crisis of communism but the disintegration of Stalinist political rule, which is itself a reflection of the ongoing crisis of world capitalism, a system in the midst of a historical decline, a “death agony,” as Trotsky called it, which will unleash horrible bloodbaths like the U.S.-led war against Iraq; a system inexorably headed toward an international economic crisis that will generate gigantic social explosions and class battles.

 Stalinism owes its very existence to the survival of world capitalism in the 1920s and beyond. It has served as a transmission belt for capitalist interests in the workers states, much as the trade union bureaucracies in capitalist countries serve as transmission belts for capitalism in unions. As imperialism undergoes a deepening structural crisis (overproduction, spiraling debt, falling rates of profit) the petty bourgeois castes, incapable of organizing the workers and peasants, increasingly relied on capitalist techniques and market mechanisms to squeeze more production of out of the workers.

Beginning in 1978, Deng Xiaoping went further down the free market road than any previous faction of the Chinese bureaucracy. The result was the creation of a layer of prosperous farmers and businesspeople, alongside increased inequalities and heightened disparities incomes and living standards. We saw vividly the fruits of these policies in 1989. Along with the desire for more democratic rights, it was the popular revulsion against bureaucratic privilege and the inequalities generated by Deng’s market reforms that fueled the Beijing Spring.

Tiananmen Square shook China’s Stalinism to its core. The pro-democracy movement, despite its lack of a working class leadership, delivered a staggering blow to the counterrevolutionary caste in the People’s Republic. But, led by Deng and Li Peng, the bureacracy was able to weather the storm, regroup and score a bloody knockout over a leaderless mass movement.

In 1989-90, the Eastern European Stalinists did not fare as well. In those countries, the massive mobilizations of working people succeeded in sweeping the totalitarian regimes from power. And in August 1991, with a speed that left the world stunned, the Soviet Communist Party collapsed, after a coup by hardline Stalinists was foiled in the face of militant street protests by the toilers in Moscow and Leningrad. So why did the Chinese Communist Party escape this fate in 1989? What prevented Deng from going the way of Ceausescu in Romania?

China’s party was more durable because it is more closely connected to a people’s revolution, one that ripped one fourth of the world’s population out of the capitalist orbit. The workers states in the Eastern European nations, as has been mentioned, were more the result of being imposed externally by the Soviet Union, whose long ago 1917 October Revolution had already degenerated.

Furthermore, the Chinese Communist Party, governing an overwhelmingly agricultural nation, as a far more genuine social base in the peasantry than did its counterparts in Eastern Europe. The further away from Beijing and Shanghai, the more the people believed the government’s version the events in Tiananmen Square. After all, the party had led the fight against the rapacious landlords and greatly improved the welfare of the peasants. The Eastern European Stalinists enjoyed no such prestige.

The deepening crisis that shattered the bureaucratic castes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union is equally inevitable in China, but up until now is less aggravated. This is because the weight of agriculture in China means that the methods of industrialization to accelerate economic growth and raise labor productivity of the other deformed workers states have not yet been exhausted. That is, in China, unlike in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, three fourths of the people still live in the countryside, so it is still possible to drive workers off the land and into the cities on a large scale to work in mining, oil extraction, and other industries, raising productivity.

Washington breathed a huge sigh of relief when Deng crushed the pro-democracy movement on June 4th. The one thing U.S. imperialism desires most of all is stability with the Stalinists. A mass, militant movement for democratic rights by the workers, the logic of which points to democratic socialism, is the last thing Washington wants to see. It is quite pleased when the Stalinists smash mass movements and stabilize their rule. That’s why Bush was so understanding and restrained in his reaction to the Tiananmen massacre; why he foughtto maintain most favored nation status for China; and why Beijing was slapped on the wrist with relatively benign sanctions, mostly restrictions on arms sales.

The fact that thousands of Chinese lay dead in Beijing’s streets didn’t seem to bother George Bush all that much; what mattered was that Deng and the rest of the bureaucrats whom the U.S. had carefully cultivated relations with since 1971 had stablized their rule and would continue to serve strategic imperialist interests. Which they did, from continuing China’s reactionary support to the hated Khmer Rouge butchers in Cambodia, to not opposing Washington’s murderous aggression against the working people of Iraq.

Witness the contrast between Cuba’s position on the Gulf war as opposed to Moscow’s and Beijing’s. While Deng and Gorbachev jumped so far in bed with Washington that they gave a nod and a wink to its war with Iraq, Cuba consistently opposed the U.S. war drive, including the criminal starvation of the Iraqi people. Revolutionary Cuba fought for peace and spoke and acted in the interests of humanity.

Meanwhile, the disintegration of Stalinism in the Soviet Union showed that Gorvachev was not as human and progressive as he was made out to be a few years earlier. In fact, he was cut from the same cloth as Deng, unleashing murderous assaults, economic sabotage and blackmail against the oppressed nationalities of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. Gorbachev and Deng outdid one another in jockeying for a better position to strike deals with Washington. The former met with Bush in December 1989 in the Mediterranean, weeks before the U.S. launched its terrorist military aggression against the people of Panama, killing thousands in a working class barrio under cover of the night. Bush lifted all sanctions against Beijing, and China answered by failing to veto Washington’s war resolution against Iraq.

The paybacks were real. Under cover of the U.S.-led attack on Iraq, Gorbachev violently attempted to crush the national aspirations of the Baltic peoples, with barely a peep out of Washington. While American jets pummeled the Iraqis, Beijing conducted the last of its Tiananmen trials, sentencing student leader Wang Dan and others to years in prison for “counterrevolutionary activities.”

To listen to the procapitalist propaganda so glibly peddled, communism is dead, while capitalism is this dynamic, vibrant, prospering system, destined to live forever under Pax Americana. But capitalism has clearly failed in the Third World and even in “industrializing” nations such as Brazil and Peru. Most working people in these countries face skyrocketing inflation, unemployment, disease, illiteracy, hunger, malnutrition and homelessness. They are suffering from an onerous, oppressive debt imposed on them by banks and governments from the capitalist world, not by workers states.

Capitalism’s proponents never ceased reminding us of the longest peacetime expansion since World War II, before the 1990-1991 recession hit. They neglected to add that this “boom” had been marked by increased poverty, homelessness, lower living standards and purchasing power for workers, massive cutbacks in social services, deteriorating health care and education, bank failures, bankruptcies, savings and loan scandals, two stock market crashes, and dangerous levels of consumer and corporate debt. All this occurred during an upturn. These are not the characteristics of a healthy, prospering system.

Far from heralding a “new world order,” U.S. imperialism continues to wage war to shore up the crumbling old world capitalist disorder. Far from a bright and stable future, capitalism faces intensified interimperialist conflicts and offers heightened aggression against the workers of the world [who will continue to rebel against capitalist exploitation ] from Iraq to Belgrade. Far from communism being irrelevant, it seems what Lenin told the Bolsheviks in 1917 still applies: “We must patiently explain. The masses will turn to us. They have no alternative.”

Contrary to the bourgeois dogma parroted by ruling class apologists, the spectre of communism is very much alive. As long as there’s an international working class, communism will haunt the bourgeoisie.

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**Epilogue—1992-93**

In the spring of 1992 I read a New York Times article entitled, “From Tiananmen Square to New York Sweatshops: One Woman’s Fight to Better the Lot of Workers Under Communism and Capitalism.” It told the story of Lu Jingua, a young woman from Beijing who had been an activist in the Beijing Autonomous Workers Federation. Ms. Jingua fled China shortly after the June 4th massacre, emigrated to the United States, where she received political asylum, and became an ace organizer for the International Ladies Garment Workers Union.

The Times article about this remarkable working class fighter inspired me to call the ILGWU’s Manhattan office and introduce myself to Ms. Jingua. Though her knowledge of English was limited, I managed to convey to Lu that I was an American unionist who had been in Beijing for the last days of the pro-democracy movement. Excited to hear from a fellow trade unionist who’d been inTiananmen Square, Ms. Jingua agreed to meet me for lunch at a restaurant near my apartment. When I showed her pictures of my Tiananmen friends, Liu shrieked in amazement.

“I know him!” she exclaimed, pointing to Liu, #008 commander of Tiananmen Square. Lu Jingua and Liu had been students together years ago.

Lu explained that while she missedher husband and children in Beijing, she was enjoying her experiences as a union organizer, and the opportunity to fight for workers rights here in the United States. Her ability to speak Cantonese was a huge plus in profoundly relating to Chinese immigrant workers so ruthlessly exploited in New York’s sweatshops.

 I didn’t hear from Lu again until May 1993.

 “Nivek, I have exciting news!” she told me. “You know your friend from Tiananmen Square, Wang? He is in New York. I’m friends with him now.”

Incredible as it sounded, Lu was now linked to two of the three Tiananmen activists I’d befriended in Beijing. She gave me Wang’s phone number, and the next day Wang and I experienced an emotional reunion over lunch in Soho. He had been living and working in New York for two years while attending classes at Seton Hall University. Ironically, Wang was flying back to Beijing the very next day, but promised to return to New York in two months.

 Wang said that he was out in the streets the night of June 4th, and confirmed that most of the casualties occurred in the side streets off Tiananmen Square. He also agreed that while there were divisions within the army over using force to end the protests, nothing close to a civil war existed, and the bureaucracy, while strained, was not yet ready to rupture, as its companion castes did in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union in 1989-91.

 Wang explained that shortly after June 4th, he was called in for questioning by the police. They wanted to know if Wang had been talking to an American journalist in Tiananmen Square throughout the week preceding the crackdown. In an impressive display of quick thinking and political sophistication, Wang replied that he had talked to an American, but this man was a Marxist who supported socialism and condemned capitalist exploitation around the world, and who disagreed with some of the Chinese about socialism. This response politically disarmed the stunned police, who could do nothing but release Wang.

 We talked about the Chinese government’s release of student leader Wang Dan after he had served a two-year jail sentence. With his release, all students had been freed by the government. But Wang said that many workers were still imprisoned for their Tiananmen activities. As always, the harshest punishment was reserved for the workers, who constitute the greatest threat to the bureaucracy.

 Four years after the Beijing Spring, the deepening crisis afflicting the international capitalist system had resulted in heightened misery and exploitation, instability, and an accelerated disintegration of the old word capitalist disorder. From Bosnia, where rival wings of the bureacracy attempted to be become capitalists by competing in a mafia-style grab for power, its disintegration caused by another Stalinist misleadership that relied on capitalist market forces; to the People’s Republic of China, where the regime’s continued embrace of free enterprise resulted in an escalating toll of human suffering, graphically illuminated by the June 1993 shipwreck of the Golden Venture off a Queens, New York beach.

 The desperate Chinese workers on that boat, literally constituting the slaves of this capitalist-generated slave trade, were more examples of the “ordinary people” who had been hurt by the “reforms” of Deng Xiaoping. They represented the other side of the “Chinese boom,” that is, China’s pro-market turn. These workers did what workers everywhere have been doing for the last few centuries of capitalism—emigrated to other lands when the glories of the free market become too much to bear at home.

 They become victims of smugglers trafficking in this modern day slave trade, gangsters who force the immigrants into conditions of indentured servitude. But these smuggling operations that the capitalist policiticians and press hypocritically criticize are not an isolated aberration. They are nothing more than a capitalist enterprise that is totally enmeshed with, and helps supply, major businesses such as garment, construction, hotel, restaurant, agriculture and meatpacking. The capitalists who own these industries could not do without the superexploitation of immigrant labor and have no intention of stopping it.

 There was much rhetoric from the Clinton administration about cracking down on the smugglers as part of real reforms in immigration policy. Rest assured that while these “reforms” resulted in immigrant workers having even fewer rights than they had before, the slave trade and the continued supplying of superexploited immigrant labor for U.S. capitalists have gone on unabated.

 As did the inhuman nature of Washington’s immigration policies, so graphically exposed by the Golden Venture tragedy. Washington’s human rights crimes against Haitian refugees then dominated international headlines for years, particularly the case of the 100 HIV-positive Haitians who languished in concentration camp-like conditions at Guantanomo Naval Base, itself an ongoing violation of Cuba’s national sovereignty.

 But there’s a side to all this movement of working people that’s in the interests of workers everywhere. It brings workers of all nations together; it helps to weaken the chauvinisms and racism that divide us; it breaks down the barriers and helps workers see that they are part of an international class; it helps us to defend ourselves for the gigantic class battles ahead. It strengthens the international working class for its historic task of preventing a third world war.

 It brings outstanding working class fighters like Lu Jingua from the garment shops of Beijing to garment shops in New York City. Lu, fresh from her rich experience in the Beijing Autonomous Workers Federation in 1989, strengthens the working class in the U.S. by her focused determination to fight to better the lot of working people, to fight for social and economic justice. There are more Lu Jinguas in China. And there will be more Malcom X's, Che Gueveras, and Joe Hills produced by the natural workings of capitalism. It’s what Marx meant when he said capitalism produces its own gravediggers. The Lu Jinguas of the world are nightmares to the garment bosses in New York City as well as the bureaucratic misleaders in Beijing.

 The Stalinists in the Chinese Communist Party have a date with destiny. They are doomed to the same fate as their counterparts in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Because of the lessons of the 1989 Tiananmen protests, China’s working people are in a stronger position to step forward and answer the question that was posed by the Beijing Spring: who should rule China?

 The sharpening antagonisms and conflicts among the major imperialist powers will deepen inexorably toward another world war. But this is not inevitable. The working class will have a chance to prevent this catastrophe from happening. If Lu Jingua does not return to China to be part of the political revolution that will one day transpire there, she will be part of the working class struggle in the U.S. to stop World War III.

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Appendix

Speech to June 10, 1989, Memorial Vigil in San Francisco Civic Center:

 “I want to express my admiration and respect for the brave and heroic Chinese people; I want to express my support for their struggle for democratic rights. And I wish to condemn the barbaric repression unleashed against them by those counterrevolutionary bureaucrats in the government who once again have blackened socialism in the eyes of working people all over the world.

“Deng Xiaoping is lying when he says the leaders of the pro-democracy movement were seeking to overthrow socialism in China and establish a capitalist republic. I was in Tiananmen Square from May 27th until June 5th, and talked to many dozens of students and workers, and not one of them talked about overthrowing the Party or restoring capitalism. Many were proud of socialism’s accomplishments and had many relatives in the Party. They did want to radically reform the Communist Party, to make it work better, and be more responsive to the people. The only counterrevolutionaries in Beijing are in the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, who murdered their own workers and students in the streets in order to protect their privileges.

“I want so say something about President Bush’s reaction to the massacre in Beijing. He said he wanted to “wait and see if there’s an escalation of the violence,” before imposing any sanctions against China. ‘Wait and see?’ How many more thousands of people have to die for Bush? Apparently the sight of thousands of dead students and workers doesn’t really bother Bush that much, given his lukewarm response to the killings in Beijing. All he cares about is stability.

“Bush says he doesn’t like sanctions because of his concern for the Chinese people? Now I’m opposed to sanctions too; they would hurt the people of China. But I can’t help but notice that Bush is extremely selective about whom he’s concerned about. Where was Bush’s concern for the Nicaraguan people when he supported sanctions against them? You can say what they want about the Sandinistas, but they never butchered thousands of their citizens in the streets of Managua.

“And the U.S. government is in no position to lecture anyone about human rights, given its record from El Salvador to Nicaragua to Palestine to Vietnam to Korea! I told everyone I spoke to in Beijing that they have no friends in Washington because the American government doesn’t give a damn about them or their fight for democratic rights; that their real allies in the world are the working people and all the oppressed fighting against exploitation and injustice.

“We will hear from the Chinese working people again. I am convinced that there will come a day when the workers, farmers and students will organize and fight for genuine socialist democracy and kick out the counterrevolutionary fakers masquerading as communists. And I am convinced that one day the Chinese working class will join hands with the workes in the United States, Cuba, France, England and the rest of the world and fight to rid the earth of all forms of violence, tyranny, oppression and exploitation. Thank you.”