

China, where a large urban social movement failed to bring any steps toward democracy, is clearly the exceptional case in this book. The contrast with the other cases is neatly captured by one date: June 4, 1989. On that Sunday morning, as Poles woke up to vote in a semi-free election that would eventually bring Solidarity to power and an end to Communist rule in all of Europe, Beijing was experiencing a brutal crackdown. Seven weeks of largely peaceful protest ended as soldiers moved into Tiananmen Square (the central square in Beijing and the largest public urban space in the world), killing hundreds of students and their supporters. Thus while Eastern Europe, along with so many other countries, chose a peaceful path toward democratic change, the leaders of China chose the opposite direction.

The easy answer to why things turned out differently could be that the Chinese dictatorship simply had more backbone, but this is an inadequate explanation. True, hard-liners in Romania and East Germany praised the Tiananmen crackdown and wished they could have done the same to their opponents. One can hear the same argument made about any revolution: If Nicholas II in Russia in 1917, or Louis XVI in France in 1789, had not been so weak and indecisive, then history would have taken a different course.

But by this point, we should recognize that the "weak man" theory of history is just the obverse of the "great man" theory and is no more satisfying. Even strong dictatorships are not capable of controlling their histories and are shaped by forces beyond (or only partially under) their control. It is important to study regime strategy and regime capabilities, but reliance on this explanation lets the historian off the hook too easily. Weak or indecisive regimes, after all, do not necessarily give way to democratic forces. So what happened in China? The documents in this chapter allow us to examine the strategies and goals of the student demonstrators.

The life experience of every Chinese citizen over age twenty-five in 1989 was shaped by what may have been the largest campaign of popular mobilization in world history: the Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976.

Encouraged by Communist party leader Mao Zedong, millions of students (many in their early teens) waged war on all that was "old" in China—old traditions, old ways of thinking, and even their elders. Students humiliated and tortured their teachers, destroyed cultural monuments, and closed down universities. Mao's death in 1976 brought the Cultural Revolution to an end and opened up a brief space for dissent, as we saw in Wei Jingsheng's essay (Document 2). But the experience, which was both exhilarating and frightening, was a paradoxical lesson both in the ability of ideas to move huge numbers of people and in the power of mobilized youth. Most of all for Chinese leaders and even some opponents, it was a lesson about the dangers of unfettered popular mobilization.

The new leader, Deng Xiaoping (1904–1997), initiated economic reforms and an opening to the West. These policies raised hopes (which Wei Jingsheng found dubious) that political reform would also be forthcoming. Questions raised by student protesters in late 1986, such as those expressed in Document 29, had the main effect of putting the regime's back up. A prominent reform proponent, Hu Yaobang, was forced to resign as party head. Protest thus remained relatively narrow in scope; the opposition was closely attuned to, even dependent on, the actions of regime leaders.

Hu's death on April 15, 1989, provided an opening for those who had continued to think about political change. The fact that it did tells us a lot about the limits of opposition in China. Hu Yaobang was no Benigno Aquino but merely an elderly Communist party official who had briefly appeared to be in favor of more reform than other top Communists. That a state funeral (and disputes over the conduct of the funeral) would provide an occasion for protest is also a reminder of the power of ritual in Chinese public life. Within days, tens of thousands of students were marching, usually toward Tiananmen Square. Hu's funeral in that square on April 22 crystallized the students' sense of a political opportunity, as three students dramatically approached the Great Hall of the People, where party leaders were assembled for the occasion, and knelt on the steps. Thus political theater played an important role in China as well.

The Chinese case raises one further, very important set of questions: What kind of change is most important, economic or political, and how are these two related? This issue concerned not only the regime itself but also its critics. Deng Xiaoping's modernization plans centered on the economy, which continued to be his focus after the suppression of the Tiananmen Movement. Ironically, then, it is the one

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...book that raises the most important questions about the future of democratic revolution. We know that today one could argue that China's emergence as a world economic power has made democratic reform less likely as people become content with a better standard of living. But one could also argue the opposite: that improved living standards eventually allow people to think about other things besides survival. There is evidence for both conclusions around the world today. Once again, however, it is worth remembering that economic conditions by themselves may only furnish the context for political change and that the ideas and actions of democratic social movements contribute more to the course of events.

In reading these documents, note the writers' relative lack of concern about economic issues. What are the students' main concerns, and how do these compare with dissidents' priorities in other cases? Also consider how students interact with or address their elders and superiors. How might these interactions yield clues to their expectations? Finally, sacrifice is an important theme in several of the documents. What does sacrifice mean to the students, and are there comparable ideas in other documents in this book?

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FANG LIZHI

*Democracy, Reform, and Modernization**November 18, 1986*


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*Fang Lizhi, just a few months older than Václav Havel, was already well known around the world in the 1980s in his field of astrophysics—in fact, he was one of China's best-known scientists. In the early 1980s, influenced in part by his experiences visiting Western universities, he began to write about the importance of academic freedom. From there he increasingly*

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*focused on larger problems of democracy, on the one hand, and modernization, on the other. This speech to students at Shanghai University was one of a series that Fang gave in the fall of 1986, during a period of relative liberalization, that contributed to student protests that winter.*

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Much of what is wrong with socialism comes from subscribing to obsolete ideas, ideas without basis in either theory or fact. Yet we never change, because we've lived with these notions so long that we are no longer aware of them. I am like this myself. I used to think that many of our problems were just a consequence of the way things are, part of the natural order. But going abroad has changed my perspective drastically. Socialism has failed in China. Certainly there are many reasons for this failure, but beyond the shadow of a doubt, much of what we have done here is neither progressive nor socialist. On the contrary, it has been extremely backward and feudalistic.

... Our understanding of the concept of democracy is so inadequate that we can barely even discuss it. With our thinking so hobbled by old dogmas, it is no wonder we don't achieve democracy in practice. Not long ago it was constantly being said that calling for democracy was equivalent to requesting that things be "loosened up." ...

I think that the key to understanding democracy lies first of all in recognizing the rights of each individual. Democracy is built from the bottom up. Every individual possesses certain rights, or to use what is a very sensitive expression indeed in China, everyone has "human rights." ...

But perhaps we are starting to view the spiritual aspects of civilization a little differently. We are beginning to see "liberty, equality, and fraternity" as a positive spiritual heritage. Over the last thirty years it seemed that every one of these good words—liberty, equality, fraternity, democracy, human rights—was labeled bourgeois by our propaganda. What on earth did that leave for us? Did we really oppose all of these things? If anything we should outdo bourgeois society and surpass its performance in human rights, nor try to deny that human rights exist.

Democracy is based on recognizing the rights of every single individual. Naturally, not everyone wants the same thing, and therefore the desires of different individuals have to be mediated through a democratic process, to form a society, a nation, a collectivity. But it is only on the foundation of recognizing the humanity and the rights of each person that we can build democracy. However, when we talk about

extending democracy" for you. This is a mistaken concept. This is not democracy. "Loosening up" is even worse. If you think about it, what it implies is that everyone is tied up very tightly right now, but if you stay put, we'll loosen the rope a little bit and let you run around. The rope used to be one foot long, now we'll make it five feet. This is a top-down approach. Democracy is first and foremost the rights of individuals, and it is individuals that must struggle for them. Expressions like "extending democracy" and "loosening up" would have you think that democracy can be bestowed upon us by those in charge. Nothing could be further from the truth. . . .

In democratic countries, democracy begins with the individual. I am the master, and the government is responsible to *me*. Citizens of democracies believe that the people maintain the government, paying taxes in return for services—running schools and hospitals, administering the city, providing for the public welfare. . . . A government depends on the taxpayers for support and therefore *has to be* responsible to its citizens. This is what people think in a democratic society. But here in China, we think the opposite way. If the government does something commendable, people say, "Oh, isn't the government great for providing us with public transportation." But this is really something it *ought* to be doing in exchange for our tax money. . . . You have to be clear about who is supporting whom economically, because setting this straight leads to the kind of thinking that democracy requires. Yet China is so feudalistic that we always expect superiors to give orders and inferiors to follow them. What our "spiritual civilization" lacks above all other things is the spirit of democracy. If you want reform—and there are more reforms needed in our political institutions than I have time to talk about—the most crucial thing of all is to have a democratic mentality and a democratic spirit.

An experience that I had in France exemplified the democratic spirit for me. Western Europe is now undergoing a lot of terrorist activity, and people are worried about it; there is strong public opinion in favor of a crackdown against terrorism. A Chinese graduate student in France told me that a recent wave of violence there, such as airport bombings, had led to proposed legislation requiring citizens to report anyone they suspect of involvement in terrorist activities to the police immediately. This seems natural to us in China: Sound the alarm, and put the whole country on alert. Therefore, I just assumed that the French would pass this law. But the student, to my great surprise, told me that after this bill was proposed, the National Assembly discussed it for a while and then

voted it down. Why? The members obviously didn't veto it because they approve of terrorism. No, their reasoning was that such a law would create informers, and the appearance of informers is the worst thing that can happen to a democratic society, an affront to human dignity and the right to privacy. The French Assembly refused to allow its citizens to be subjected to casual suspicion.

In China, if I suspect that you harbor bad intentions, I'll just trot over and "make a report," and never think twice about it. In fact, such behavior is praised for demonstrating "a high sense of alertness," and "an elevated class consciousness." But it also runs completely counter to democracy, and it demonstrates a lack of comprehension about fundamental human rights. No one should be subjected to casual suspicion or forced to live under constant terror. But in China people have long lived in perpetual terror, afraid of someone reporting on them even when they have done nothing wrong. If I look suspicious in the least, whether I've done anything or not, you'll rush right out and report me. Democracy will never take root in such an environment. . . .

The intellectual realm must be independent and have its own values.

This is an essential guarantee of democracy. It is only when you know something independently that you are free from relying on authorities outside the intellectual domain, such as the government. Unfortunately, things are not this way in China. I have discussed this problem with educators. In the past, even during "the seventeen years" [1949 to 1966, the era prior to the Cultural Revolution], our universities were mainly engaged in producing tools, not in educating human beings. Education was not concerned with helping students to become critical thinkers, but with producing docile instruments to be used by others. Chinese intellectuals need to insist on thinking for themselves and using their own judgment, but I'm afraid that even now we have not grasped this lesson. . . .

*Question:* Surely we can't pin our hopes on the Communist Party's reforming itself peacefully and carrying out "complete Westernization"? In your heart of hearts, do you really think that the Party can remove the cancer that has spread all through it? Or do we, in the end, need another people's revolution?

*Fang:* I think I can answer this question. The Communist Party faces a great many problems. Behind closed doors, the assessment is that even if the reforms are successful, the Party will still be in serious trouble. Some people will ask how I can say such things in public,

but I think that the Party is in a situation where it has to reform whether it wants to or not. If all of China awakens to this fact, starting with all the students, and all the young intellectuals, and finally all the other intellectuals, then things will change. And if there were no change, the country would get rid of the Party.

Whether the Party reforms itself or not won't be determined by some leader, but by all the forces of history. We shouldn't think that the Party can remain totally isolated from the masses; it's impossible. . . .

So when you ask if the Party is going to reform itself, you have to look at the society as a whole. Of course, if the leaders are good, that's great. But even if the leaders aren't good, as long as the masses can slowly absorb the most progressive Western cultural influences, then there will be change, one way or another. Now, as to how change is achieved: Will it definitely take violence? I think—especially after seeing both the East and the West—that there are many pathways available. As soon as we think about change, we think of political power growing from the barrel of a gun. We are conditioned by our ideology to think that any kind of change requires a gun.

But I think that in the West, many reforms have succeeded without taking such a drastic course. They have followed the path of gradual reform. Reform is not an absolute impossibility. Last year was better than the year before, this year better than last year, and maybe next year will bring still more improvement. . . . Don't underestimate the power of incremental change.

## Government Representatives Meet with Students

April 29, 1989

*Though discussions about the need for democratic reform continued on university campuses, they did not break out into the open until the death of Hu Yaobang. Hu's funeral on April 22, 1989, widely disappointed students, many of whom felt that the petition of the kneeling students ought to have been received, preferably by Premier Li Peng. Two days later, a student boycott shut down nearly all Beijing universities. A march on April 27 attracted at least a hundred thousand, including many who were not students; it appeared to be a real breakthrough into public politics. In this context of rising conflict, the government arranged a staged, and publicly broadcast, "dialogue" with student representatives. The regime participants were Yuan Mu, spokesman of the State Council (and thus a senior figure, but not involved in policy); He Dongchang, chair of the State Education Commission; and Yuan Liben of the Beijing Municipal Communist Party Committee. In this way, the government clearly hoped to defuse student discontent; the question was what students hoped to gain. Simply to be able to question a midlevel official on television was an achievement, but what exactly was the point of the dialogue?*

**Yuan Mu:** Entrusted by the State Council and Comrade Li Peng, I and concerned comrades of the State Education Commission and Beijing Municipality have come here to hold a discussion, a dialogue, with you today.

Leading comrades of our party and state are showing great concern for the broad masses of students. They asked me to speak to you and through you to speak to the broad masses of students of schools of higher learning in the capital. They hope that the broad masses of students will return to their classes as quickly as possible. . . . The broad masses of students, filled with patriotic enthusi-



asm, hope to promote democracy, strengthen the reform, punish those guilty of embezzlement, and overcome corruption. All those wishes are in complete accord with the wishes of the party and the government. . . .

We can say that at present our country is faced with many difficulties, and it would be even more difficult to overcome those difficulties if there are disturbances and instability. They hope that you students and people of all circles in the society will strive to support the party and the government, adhere to the four cardinal principles,<sup>1</sup> keep to the general policy of reform and opening to the outside world, carry out the reform and open policy, and promote socialist modernization through to the end and achieve our desired victories. Before I came here, the leading comrades of the party and state asked me to make these remarks to you students.

Now if you have any questions, please ask them. . . .

*Student:* I am Xiang Xiaoqi, a postgraduate student in the study of international law at the University of Political Science and Law. . . .

The meeting today can only be regarded as a preliminary one aimed at creating a tranquil atmosphere and smoothing out the channels for dialogue. This is not the official form of dialogue demanded by the broad masses of students. . . .

*Yuan Mu:* With regard to this statement, I would like to express my views. The form of dialogue can be varied, I think. Our dialogue is not a negotiation between opponents. . . . There is no negotiation existing between the government and the students. Today's form of dialogue is fine, if the students wish to express their views. . . . Dialogue means getting together and engaging in conversation, exchanging ideas, and deepening understanding. So long as we conduct dialogue in this manner without setting preconditions, today's dialogue will certainly help facilitate the exchange of views, I think. . . .

*Student:* I am Chang Weijun of the College of Architectural Engineering. I would like to ask Comrade Yuan a question. To lead an austere life, we need the proper atmosphere. We should share weal and woe. Some people golf every Sunday in the company of their wives. Is there not a big gap between this practice and the material life of the whole people as well as the spirit of working together to tide over difficulties? [Applause.]

<sup>1</sup> Deng Xiaoping in 1979 the four cardinal principles called for upholding

I have with me issue No. 2 for 1989 of the magazine *Jiankang zhinan* [Guide to health]. On page 48 is a report on an excellent golfer. There is also a color picture here. . . .

[Another student holds up a copy of *Jiankang zhinan*, showing a page which reads: "Excellent golfer—Zhao Ziyang."<sup>2</sup> The page also shows four color photos of Zhao Ziyang playing golf.]

*Yuan Mu*: I will forward this student's opinion to the leading comrades concerned. There are still very few golfers in China. Students think it is unnecessary. Sometimes, however, for the sake of international intercourse, it is permissible to golf a little. But do not overdo it. But I do not know the actual situation and cannot tell if golf was played every Sunday. If this is true, I will convey this message to the leader. . . .

*Unidentified student*: I am a student of the Department of Management of the Beijing Aeronautical Engineering Institute, admitted in 1986. . . . The most important questions that need to be answered today are the questions we raised in the student strike. Therefore, our dialogue must be held with the party and state leaders. However, no party and state leaders are present here today; thus, today's dialogue cannot answer any questions raised in the student strike. So this is not the dialogue we students asked for. So I, representing myself, have decided to leave this meeting room. Fellow students who support my opinion, please also leave. . . . [Video shows student leaving alone, while other students raise their hands asking for the floor.] . . .

*He Dongchang*: Please let me say a few words. Regarding our students of schools of higher learning in the capital as well as students of the entire country, I, myself, and staff members of the State Education Commission, adult comrades, teachers and presidents of various schools all have the same frame of mind, that is, they want to love students as they love their dearest children. Even if the students make mistakes, we will help them correct their mistakes. In other words, if there are 160,000 students in the capital, we have such feelings toward more than 99 percent of them. However, we must guard against those who hide behind you and whom you students don't know. Those people are only a small handful, but it merits our attention to watch them. . . .

<sup>2</sup>*Zhao Ziyang* (1919–2005): general secretary of the Chinese Communist party (1987–1989). Ironically, Zhao Ziyang turned out to be a proponent of real dialogue with the students in Tiananmen Square. In his posthumous memoirs, *Prisoner of the State: The Secret Journal of Premier Zhao Ziyang* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009), he argues that China needs Western-style democracy.

*Student:* I am Fu Haifeng, a student of the 1988 class of the Department of International Politics at Beijing University. I was one of the representatives who went down on their knees in front of the Great Hall of the People on April 22. . . .

As a participant and witness of history, I would like to raise . . . questions regarding the circumstances at that time. . . . The 100,000 students sat quietly for several hours and the three representatives went down on their knees for thirty minutes, expressing our strong desire to hold a dialogue with the government. Why didn't the government send an official to talk to the students and their representatives? Instead, only two staff members of the funeral committee showed up. . . .

*Yuan Liben:* . . . The three students' kneeling down, to tell the truth, surprised everyone. Under such circumstances, those common public functionaries could not help but wonder what to do because they are just common public functionaries. I think you should understand this point. . . . Compared with the main demands of our students, . . . I think this was just a very small incident. We already have clearly explained the events. . . .

*Yuan Liben:* . . . I feel that regardless of the form of dialogue and regardless of whether or not the participants are representative of the students, dialogue is comprehensive only when it serves to help understand the thinking of people from all strata and all walks of life. . . .

For instance, today we have understood the views of many students and the problems they have. As for solutions, I agree that the purpose of dialogue is to find solutions. However, we must not be metaphysical. We must not think that all problems have solutions once dialogue is held. If we think like this, then we are guilty of holding an oversimplified view of our country's entire modernization process. Some of the questions raised by the students can be answered, especially certain specific questions raised to clarify certain facts. Some questions can be explained to the students. Some questions need to be reported and further studied. Certain questions, in particular, require a legal process. . . .

*Student:* I am Zhang Zhaohui from the Department of Chinese at Beijing Teachers University. Leaders have often said that we should draw a line of demarcation between troublemaking by a handful of people and the good will of the vast number of students. Now I would like to ask: What is the central authorities' assessment of the recent student movement joined by over 100,000 students in

Beijing, and how will the central authorities deal with the student organizers of the movement? . . .

*He Dongchang:* In giving equal stress to democracy and the legal system, we handle problems in the spirit of democracy and according to the law. So long as one does not violate the provisions of state laws and decrees, he or she is innocent. This applies to people in general, including students, teachers, and other citizens. Even before the student movement took place, I, as an official of the Education Commission, believed that young students who engaged in improper behavior or speech out of excitement should be totally forgiven. This is still my attitude [applause]. . . .

*Student:* I am Jiang Jingcheng, a student from the Beijing College of Leadership and Economic Management, admitted in 1987. I wish to point out that two large-scale student demonstrations were held on April 21 and 27. The demonstrators were cheered and assisted by hundreds of thousands of Beijing residents who lined the procession route. Some people carried weaker students on bicycles and trishaws, while others offered money, cigarettes, and food, shouting "Long live college students," "The people support you," and other slogans. Some people even broke into tears and were moved by the students' enthusiasm and sincerity. Doesn't this show that the students' movement should be affirmed and that it accords with popular sentiments? What is the government's explanation of these incidents?

*Yuan Mu:* We addressed this question at the very beginning of this meeting, as well as in many of our replies to other questions. Out of patriotic enthusiasm, most students wanted to express their desire to promote democracy, to deepen reform, to punish corrupt officials and official racketeers, and so on. This is completely understandable to the party and the government, both of which consider the students' desire to be entirely in accord with the goal that the party and government should strive to achieve in their work. . . .

*Student:* I am a student in the Department of Law at the University of Political Science and Law. My name is Wu Junjie. . . .

First, I would like to talk about the views put forward by the editorial of *Renmin ribao*,<sup>3</sup> on April 26. At present, the broad masses of fellow students are of the opinion that they cannot agree with the term "disturbance." We are not creating a disturbance. Second, my

fellow students do not agree with the term "a handful of people." Most students have taken part in this activity. The editorial, the broad masses of students believe, is a calumny and smear against the students. Third, they do not agree with the editorial's determination of the nature of the students' demonstration as an activity that advocates opposition to the party and the government. The broad masses of fellow students still love their country. . . .

*Yuan Liben:* . . . Students should know that the government is not opposed to them. Although we disapprove of some of your actions, you are our students. This is the basic idea. I hope students will go from the bottom of our hearts, we still regard you as children, and back and convey this idea to other students. You can also calmly analyze the two demonstrations. This much I have to say. . . .

*He Dongchang:* We have different views on some problems. It depends on how you look at it. I think we can take our time. We should seek truth from facts. Regarding the matters involving the University of Political Science and Law, the armed police, and Tiananmen, students may check with the armed police. I think we should seek truth from facts by conducting studies and investigations. We should not handle things based on our feelings. There is a song called "Move Ahead by Following Our Feelings." We cannot move ahead by simply following our feelings.

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## *Hunger Strikers' Announcement*

*May 12, 1989*

The decision to stage a hunger strike and to conduct it in Tiananmen Square was the pivotal moment of the protests of spring 1989. A hunger strike is a ritual; some hunger strikers proclaim they are fasting for a certain number of days, while others vow to fast until death. The latter form,

*which these student protesters adopted, is analogous to a self-immolation, as the strikers aim to inspire or shake up their fellow citizens while shaming the authorities through sacrifice. It is an ambiguous weapon, though, because even if the demands include dialogue or compromise, the radical form of the protest seems to preclude such responses. This hunger strike lasted a week; another one, launched by four prominent cultural-intellectual figures, began two days before the June 4 crackdown.*

In this bright sunny month of May, we are on a hunger strike. In this best moment of our youth, we have no choice but to leave behind us everything beautiful about life. But how reluctant, how unwilling we are!

However, the country has come to this juncture: rampant inflation; widespread illegal business dealings by corrupt officials; the dominance of abusive power; the corruption of bureaucrats; the fleeing of a large number of good people to other countries; and the deterioration of law and order. Compatriots and all fellow countrymen with a conscience, at this critical moment of life and death of our people, please listen to our voice:

This country is our country,  
 The people are our people.  
 The government is our government.  
 Who will shout if we don't?  
 Who will act if we don't?

Although our shoulders are still tender, although death for us is still seemingly too harsh to bear, we have to part with life. When history demands us to do so, we have no choice but to die.

Our national sentiment at its purest and our loyalty at its best are labeled as "chaotic disturbance"; as "with an ulterior motive"; and as "manipulated by a small gang."

We request all honorable Chinese, every worker, peasant, soldier, ordinary citizen, intellectual, and renowned individuals, government officials, police and those who fabricated our crimes to put their hands over their hearts and examine their conscience: what crime have we committed? Are we creating chaotic disturbances? We walk out of classrooms, we march, we hunger strike, we hide. Yet our feelings are betrayed time after time. We bear the suffering of hunger to pursue the truth, and all we get is the beatings of the police. When we kneel down to beg for democracy, we are being ignored. Our request for dialogue on equal terms is met with delay after delay. Our student leaders encounter personal dangers.

What is Democracy is the most noble meaning of life; freedom is a basic human right. But the price of democracy and freedom is our life. Can the Chinese people be proud of this?

We have no other alternative but to hunger strike. We have to strike. It is with the spirit of death that we fight for life. But we are still children, we are still children! Mother China, please take a hard look at your children. Hunger is ruthlessly destroying their youth. Are you really not touched when death is approaching them?

We do not want to die. In fact, we wish to continue to live comfortably because we are in the prime years of our lives. We do not wish to die; we want to be able to study properly. Our homeland is so poor. It seems irresponsible of us to desert our homeland to die. Death is definitely not our pursuit. But if the death of a single person or a number of persons would enable a larger number of people to live better, or if the death can make our homeland stronger and more prosperous, then we have no right to drag on an ignoble existence.

When we are suffering from hunger, moms and dads, please don't be sad. When we bid farewell to life, uncles and aunts, please don't be heart-broken. Our only hope is that the Chinese people will live better. We have only one request: please don't forget that we are definitely not after death. Democracy is not the private matter of a few individuals, and the enterprise of building democracy is definitely not to be accomplished in a single generation.

It is through death that we await a far-reaching and perpetual echo by others.

When a person is about to die, he speaks from his heart. When a horse is about to die, its cries are sad.

Farewell comrades, take care, the same loyalty and faith bind the living and the dead.

Farewell loved ones, take care. I don't want to leave you, but I have to part with life.

Farewell moms and dads, please forgive us. Your children cannot have loyalty to our country and filial piety to you at the same time.

Farewell fellow countrymen, please permit us to repay our country in the only way left to us. The pledge that is delivered by death will one day clear the sky of our republic.

The reasons of our hunger strike are: first, to protest the cold and apathetic attitude of our government towards the students' strike; second, to protest the delay of our higher learning; and third, to protest

the government's continuous distortions in its reporting of this patriotic and democratic movement of students, and their labeling it as a "chaotic disturbance."

The demands from the hunger strikers are: first, on equal basis, the government should immediately conduct concrete and substantial dialogues with the delegation of Beijing institutes of higher learning. Second, the government should give this movement a correct name, a fair and unbiased assessment, and should affirm that this is a patriotic and democratic students' movement.

The date for the hunger strike is 2:00 p.m., May 13; location, Tiananmen Square.

This is not a chaotic disturbance. Its name should be immediately rectified. Immediate dialogue! No more delays! Hunger strike for the people! We have no choice. We appeal to world opinion to support us. We appeal to all democratic forces to support us.

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### CHAI LING

#### *I Am Still Alive*

*June 8, 1989*

*Chai Ling, then just twenty-three years old, became one of the most prominent participants in the Tiananmen protests at about the time of the hunger strike. She was the leader of the Hunger Strike Council, which essentially ran the occupation of Tiananmen Square. During the three weeks that students occupied the square, it became the center of the attention of the world's media. Workers, students, and other groups staged marches that culminated there; artists built a nine-meter Goddess of Democracy statue. Late in the evening of June 3, a "Democracy University" began meeting.*

*But the regime had declared martial law on May 19 and was moving inexorably toward confrontation. So too were the students, and Chai*



*Ling was among those pushing a more forceful line. One factor in the regime's decision to send in the army was the lack of any possible external pressure; another was that the economy had not sapped the strength of the ruling elite (as it still has not today). But the ritualized nature of opposition, and perhaps the very vagueness of the protesters' goals, may also have made any other outcome, such as democratic transformation, unlikely. It is important, in reading this document, to remember that it was composed a few days after the crackdown, from the relative safety of Hong Kong. The author is recalling the events but also, presumably, reshaping them as we all do with our memories.*

Today is June 8th, 1989. It is now 4:00 p.m. I am Chai Ling, Commander-in-Chief in Tiananmen Square. I am still alive.

I believe I am the best qualified witness to the situation in the Square during the period from June 2nd to 4th June, and I also have the responsibility to tell that truth to everyone, every single countryman, every single citizen. . . .

Now, let me briefly describe our position. I was Commander-in-Chief in the Square, where at that time there was a broadcasting station for the hunger strike group. I stayed there throughout, directing the activities of all the students in the Square. . . . We received constant and urgent messages, from every direction, that students and citizens were being beaten and harassed. . . .

Around 7:00 or 8:00 p.m. we, the commanding unit, had held a press conference, and told both local and foreign reporters as much as we knew of the situation. . . . The commanding unit made one statement, saying that the only slogan we held was, "Down with Li Peng's false Government."

At 9:00 p.m. sharp, all of the students in the Square stood up and with their right hands raised, declared: "I vow that, for the promotion of our nation's process of democratization, for the true prosperity of our nation, for our great nation, for defense against a handful of schemers for the salvation of our 1.1 billion countrymen from White Terror,<sup>1</sup> that I will give up my young life to protect Tiananmen Square,

to protect the Republic. Heads can fall, blood can run, but the people's Square can never be abandoned. We are willing to sacrifice our young lives in a fight to the death of the very last person."

At 10:00 p.m. sharp, the Democratic University was formally established in the Square, with vice-commander Jiang Deli becoming the principal, and people from all sides celebrated the occasion enthusiastically. At that time, the commanding unit was receiving many urgent warnings, as the situation became very tense. On one hand, there was the thunderous applause for the establishment of our Democratic University in the northern part of the Square near the Statue of the Goddess of Liberty; whereas along the Boulevard of Eternal Peace at the eastern edge of the Square, there was a river of blood. Murderers, those soldiers of the 27th Battalion, used tanks, heavy machine guns, bayonets (tear gas being already outdated) on people who did no more than utter a slogan, or throw a stone. They chased after the people, shooting with their machine guns. All the corpses along the Boulevard of Eternal Peace bled heavily from their chests; and all the students who ran to us were bleeding in the arms, chests and legs. They did this to their own countrymen, taking their life's blood. The students were very angry and held their dead friends in their arms.

After 10:00 p.m. we, the commanding unit, made a request based upon the principle that our Patriotic-Democratic Movement, as both a Student Movement and People's Movement, had always been to demonstrate peacefully. In opposition, therefore, to the many students and citizens who angrily declared that it was time to use weapons, we proposed the supreme principle of peace and sacrifice.

In this way, hands joined together, shoulder to shoulder, singing "The Internationale,"<sup>2</sup> we slowly came out from our tents. Hands joined, we came to the western, northern and the southern sides of the Monument of the People's Heroes,<sup>3</sup> and sat there quietly, with serenity in our eyes, waiting for the attack by murderers. What we were involved in was a battle between love and hate, not one between violence and military force. We all knew that if we used things like clubs, gasoline bottles and the like (which are hardly weapons) against those soldiers,

who were holding machine guns or riding in tanks, and who were out of their minds, then this would have been the greatest tragedy for our Democracy Movement.

So the students sat there silently, waiting to give up their lives. There were loudspeakers next to the commanding unit's tent playing "The Descendants of the Dragon."<sup>4</sup> We sang along with it, with tears in our eyes. We embraced each other, shook hands, because we knew that the last moment of our lives, the moment to give up our lives for our nation, had arrived.

... People of the Republic, you must not forget the children who fought for you.

Between 2:00 and 3:00 a.m. on June 4th, we had to abandon our headquarters at the bottom of the Monument and move to the Monument's platform to continue our command of the Square. As Commander-in-Chief, I went with my deputy, Li Lu, to visit the students around the Monument, to give them moral support. The students just sat there quietly. They told me they would sit there in the first row, steadfast and immovable. Students in the back row said they, too, would remain steadfast. "We would not be afraid even if the front row of students was beaten and killed. We would continue to sit still and not withdraw. We would not retaliate and kill."

I chatted with the students and told them the old story that goes: "There were these 1.1 billion ants living on a mountain top. One day, the mountain was ablaze. To survive, the ants had to get down the mountain. They gathered themselves into a giant ball and rolled down the mountain. The ants on the outside were burnt to death. But the lives of many more were saved. My fellow students, we at the Square are the outermost layer, because in our hearts we understand that only by dying can we ensure the survival of the Republic." The students sang the *Internationale* again and again. They held hands tightly. . . . We decided to leave.

But the executioners didn't keep their word. As students were leaving, armed troops charged up to the third level of the Monument. They didn't wait for us to inform everyone of the decision to leave. They had already shot our loudspeakers to pieces. That was the Monument to the People's Heroes. They dared to open fire at the Monument. Most of the students withdrew. With tears in our eyes, we

...inger who joined  
to the

started to leave the Square. People told us not to cry. We said we would be back, because this is the People's Square. . . .

Then the tanks made "mincemeat" of them. Some say more than 200 students died. Some say more than 4000 died in the Square alone. I don't know the total. But the members of the Independent Workers' Union were on the outside. They stood their ground and they're all dead. There were twenty to thirty of them. I heard that, after the students left, tanks and armored personnel carriers flattened tents with bodies inside. They poured gasoline over them and burned them. Then they washed away the traces with water. Our movement's symbol, the Goddess of Democracy, was crushed to bits.

With locked arms, we went around Chairman Mao's Memorial toward the south of the Square. That was when we first saw tens of thousands of helmeted soldiers. The students ran toward them and yelled: "Dogs. Fascists." So we headed west, and saw ranks upon ranks of soldiers running toward the Square. Civilians, students, though hoarse from all the yelling, continued to shout: "Fascists, dogs, beasts." But they were ignored by the soldiers, who kept on running toward "our" Square. . . .

The radio kept saying that the troops had come to Beijing to deal with riotous elements and to maintain order in the capital. I think I'm most qualified to say that we students are not riotous elements. Anyone with a conscience should put his hand on his chest and think of children, arm in arm, shoulder to shoulder, sitting quietly under the Monument, their eyes awaiting the executioner's blade. Can they be riotous elements? If they were riotous elements, would they sit there quietly? . . .

We who walked away from Tiananmen Square arrived at Beijing University, still alive. Many students from other universities, students from out of town, had prepared beds to welcome us. But we were very, very sad. We were alive. Many more were left in the Square, and on Changan Avenue. They'll never come back. Some of them were very young. They will never come back.

As we entered Beijing University, our hunger strike turned sit-in, our peaceful protest, came to an end. . . .

But my compatriots, even at the darkest moment, dawn will still break. Even with the frenzied, fascist crackdown, a true people's democratic republic will be born. The critical moment has come. My compatriots, all Chinese nationals with a conscience, all Chinese

people, wake up! The ultimate victory must be the people's! Yang  
Shangkun, Li Peng, Wang Zhen and Bo Yibo,<sup>5</sup> the final hour of your  
puppet regime is near!

*Down with Fascism!*

*Down with Military Rule!*

*Long Live the Republic!*