

The Tiananmen Papers Revisited*

Alfred L. Chan, with a rejoinder by Andrew J. Nathan

ABSTRACT Authentic Chinese internal documents matter greatly as historical records that illuminate our understanding of Chinese politics. Yet careful scrutiny shows that the Chinese book version of the Tiananmen Papers is part fiction and part documentary history based on open and semi-open sources and document collections. The alleged transcripts of top-level meetings are basically stitched together *ex post facto* (even by the admission of the editors) and then presented as secret documents. Furthermore, the English translation is a heavily retouched version of the Chinese with differences in claims of authenticity, translation, citation and style. There is little evidence that any real secret documents are in the hands of the Chinese author, and even if they were, the two books under consideration are really secondary sources steps removed from the originals. The editors strongly vouch for the authenticity of these two books, but their efforts are inadequate and unconvincing.

Although the Tiananmen Incident of 1989 and the events surrounding it were scrutinized closely by world-wide attention at the time, the publication of the Tiananmen Papers (hereinafter TP)¹ nearly 12 years later was another huge media event rekindling tremendous interests and front-page coverage. Purportedly a collection of top secret documents restricted to “a tiny handful” of China’s top leaders, TP promised to throw important light on the crisis decision-making process of the innermost sanctum of the Chinese leadership in 1989 which ultimately led to martial law, massacre, crackdown and a change in the top leadership. Authentic documents matter greatly for our understanding of Chinese politics, because a great deal of what is known about the 1989 events (such as the alleged involvement of the Elders) is merely assumed, and empirical proof is essential. Yet, a review of the TP project exposes fundamental flaws which greatly undermine its claim to authenticity.

According to the editors, in the late 1990s a Chinese Communist Party cadre known only by the pseudonym Zhang Liang approached Nathan outside China with hundreds of alleged transcripts and minutes of meetings of the top echelon of the Party, memoranda of private conversations among leaders, and reports on the mass movement and foreign reactions submitted to the leadership by the ministries, provinces and subordinate

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1. *The Tiananmen Papers: The Chinese Leadership's Decision to use Force against Their Own People – In Their Own Words* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001). Compiled by Zhang Liang. Edited by Andrew Nathan and Perry Link, with an afterword by Orville Schell.

agencies. Some of these are in the public record, but others are said to be available to at most 40 or so Chinese leaders, which even Jiang Zemin “cannot surreptitiously examine” (TP, pp. xvii, xxviii). Nathan strongly vouches for the authenticity of these documents. To him they are so rich, detailed, coherent and believable as to be virtually impossible to forge even with research (TP, p. xx).

Nathan’s assurance notwithstanding, the spectre of forgery was raised from the moment of publication, but the reaction has been mixed. The Chinese government flatly denounces it, but provides no specifics. Among overseas Chinese readers, an often emotional debate has raged between believers and doubters in newspapers, magazines and on the internet. Some exiled democracy activists vouch for its authenticity, being thankful to the publication for spotlighting the issues. Other knowledgeable Chinese condemn it as a forgery. Among academics, some were sceptical, while others claimed that the documents reveal little that is not already known, since even minute details on the subject have been described in the dozens of books in both English and Chinese. For others, their misgivings have given way to grudging acceptance out of respect for the reputation of the editors.² Increasingly TP is being quoted in academic writings as if it was the real McCoy.³

In this journal, TP has already been reviewed perceptively.⁴ After that, the single most damaging critique of TP citing specific evidence was published in Hong Kong, but Nathan’s subsequent article does not confront it.⁵ Moreover, the Chinese version of TP entitled *Zhongguo liusi zhenxiang* (*June Fourth: The True Story*) (New York: Mirror Books, 2001) (hereinafter TS), which contains three times as much material as TP, has not been systematically compared with TP in English, despite Nathan’s repeated challenge for doubters to refer to it.⁶ Readers of TS will immediately notice that it is significantly different from TP in style, translation and presentation. It also throws more light on the entire project and the issue of authenticity. The following sections review the nature of Chinese internal documents and Chinese publications, the editorial policies and processes of TS and TP, the significant discrepancies between the two versions, and the unanswered challenges to the authenticity of the documents. This is buttressed with our own research and new evidence.

2. TP has been reviewed numerous times. A good collection of reviews is Qin Ling, *Liusi zhenxiang mingjia tan* (*Prominent People Discuss June Fourth: The True Story*) (Edison, NJ: Dajiyuan chubanshe, 2001).

3. For instance, see Susan Shirk, “The delayed institutionalization of leadership politics,” in Jonathan Unger (ed.), *The Nature of Chinese Politics: From Mao to Jiang* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2002), p. 303. Nathan uses TP to confirm points made in a different publication, see Andrew J. Nathan and Bruce Gilley, *China’s New Leaders: The Secret Files* (New York: New York Review Books, 2002), pp. 24, 77, 109 and 151.

4. Lowell Dittmer, “The Tiananmen Papers,” *The China Quarterly*, No. 166 (June 2001), pp. 476–483.

5. Andrew J. Nathan, “The Tiananmen Papers: an editor’s reflections,” *The China Quarterly*, No. 167 (September 2001), pp. 724–737.

6. TP, p. xlii; Nathan, “The Tiananmen Papers,” p. 728. A brief comparison of TS and TP is in Peter Moody, “Tiananmen: the Papers and the story,” *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 64, No. 1 (Winter 2002), pp. 149–165.

Chinese Secret Documents, Propaganda, the Literary Imagination and Authenticity

Those who work closely with Chinese archives cannot have failed to recognize an irony in Chinese secret and internal documents. In China, access to information is tightly controlled, as even the most common information will often be labelled secret, but many documents stamped “top secret” can be found in research libraries all over the West. Nathan is right to say that every day a stream of documents from different ministries, provinces and agencies flows into the Party and state headquarters in Zhongnanhai, but he does not mention that a parallel flow (including full or partially secret documents) moves in the other direction down the administrative ladder to reveal, explain and justify government policies and propaganda. The huge size of the bureaucracy also means that the number of people having access to transmitted documents is correspondingly large and leakage is always high, particularly in the face of hungry demands from overseas media and intelligence services. Often so much is classified secret or internal that local authorities lose sense of what is important and what is not, and over time much is simply discarded. During the reform period, local officials even attempted to peddle duffle bags of documents to overseas libraries for a price.

Such information fuels a large body of political and historical writings that encompass popular histories, biographies, novels and “report literature” published in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. The best of these are serious and reliable works based on interviews, investigative journalism and careful analyses; the worst are pure sensationalism, speculations, sheer fantasies or forgeries. Many authors claim privileged access to official archives, and by weaving together official documents, chronologies, statistics, memoirs by former politicians, hearsay and a large dose of imagination, they dramatize politics at the top by recounting events in minute detail. Many such writings include purported dialogue and descriptions of the thoughts of the protagonists. And because of a relaxed Chinese cultural attitude toward originality, they seldom acknowledge their sources, and it is fair game to copy verbatim from them, and from one another, with impunity. This background is necessary to situate TS and TP in their proper context.

The other necessary context is a clear definition of authenticity. In view of the extraordinary assertions made by Zhang and his team, authenticity in this context would be obtained by satisfying most of the following conditions. First, the documents would be genuinely classified materials intended for the eyes of only a few Chinese leaders or transcripts of high-level internal exchanges. Secondly, they would not have been tampered with or altered. Thirdly, they would be original documents submitted to Party Central by subordinate agencies and not reconstructed by research from open or semi-open sources. An analogous example of authentic documents might be the transcripts of original White House recordings made during the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Vietnam War and the Watergate Affair. One cannot regard as authentic the spate of fictions,

dramas, film scripts and histories that utilize or incorporate these documents, no matter how accurately they represent the events.

Faulty Editorial Policies and Processes

By referring to the above, we argue that the Tiananmen Papers project was flawed from the beginning by several editorial decisions which propounded a just-trust-us attitude. The most accurate way of presenting the documents would be for the editors to select, verify and translate individual items from Zhang's trove into English directly, and let readers judge for themselves. Yet this method was not followed in TS and TP for the following reasons. First, Schell explains, because of a "fervent conviction," presumably due to patriotism, Zhang could not bear to let the originals fall into the hands of foreigners and consequently, documents he gave to the editors were not originals ("or even facsimiles") in his possession, but a computer printout of selected transcriptions from these documents (TP, pp. xx, 470, 472). Whether originals have ever existed is a mystery. Secondly, instead of being a faithful reproduction of the original documents, TS is a heavily condensed, merged and summarized history using those sources. Furthermore, Zhang frequently interjects his own interpretations and commentaries into the alleged factual documents, a practice that could only be called editorializing. Thirdly, TP is an even more heavily edited version of TS consisting of only one-third of TS's material, although Nathan refers to both versions interchangeably as a single entity. Fourthly, according to Nathan, much of the informal speeches (and possibly even the so-called "official transcripts" of top level meetings) were not necessarily recorded on-the-spot, but were patched together from *ex post facto* recollections, briefings and memoranda of conversations (TP, p. xli). The claim as authentic documents that have undergone such altering is shaky at best; it falls flat under serious challenge from other angles. We will examine these in turn.

Discrepancies between the Chinese and the English Versions

Information regarding how closely the editors co-operated with Zhang over a period of several years and how Zhang selected from his trove to compile TS is sketchy, especially when Nathan said that he had to withhold information (even from the other editors) to protect Zhang (p. xix). Nathan does say that he advised Zhang on the selection and the abridgement of the documents to turn it into the Chinese edition (pp. xli-xlii). Anyhow, TS and TP do not corroborate with one another, because there are remarkable differences not only in length, but also in claims of authenticity, translation, citation, style and presentation.

Translation and omissions. Both TS and TP begin with Nathan's long and Zhang's terse introductions in generally accurate translations. However, Zhang's claim of authenticity in TS (p. 61) is distinctly more modest than its counterpart in English translation. Zhang writes:

Right now, the only thing we can say to our readers is that all the sources for the materials of the book can be accounted for (*you genju de*). The narrative of the book will be factual and objective. To be faithful to history, the book will take the form of historical chronology to document the day-to-day events ... We will avoid as much as possible any insertion of our own subjective commentaries, for fear that our opinions may affect the readers' own appraisal. (Author's translation)⁷

Yet, in TP (p. xiii), the same sentences are translated baldly as:

These materials are authentic; the documents, both those that are translated and those that are summarized in this book, speak for themselves.

The material is arranged in day-by-day chronology ... The materials are presented with a minimum of commentary so that the reader can make independent judgements.

Two other examples of discrepancies are in the following. First, after a description of the key 27 May meeting at Deng's residence to nominate Jiang Zemin to replace Zhao Ziyang as CCP general secretary, TS (p. 757) has this to say:

At this conference, the elders had blatantly elevated themselves above the Central Committee, shut out the incumbent members of the Politburo Standing Committee, violated the CCP constitution, and crushed the internal operating norms of the CCP. They had resorted to illegal means to replace the highest leadership of the Party Central of the CCP in order to accomplish a *bloodless coup d'état*. (italics mine)

This is replaced in TP (p. 314) by a more neutral "summary":

The motion to appoint Jiang and to add Li and Song to the Standing Committee had been approved by the Elders by a show of hands. But this violated the Chinese Communist Party Constitution, which stipulates that the Politburo Standing Committee should make such decisions.

A second example from TP, p. 219 and TS, pp. 523–24:

Following up on a suggestion from Li Peng's wife Zhu Lin, in the afternoon Luo Gan personally inspected and arranged for the refurbishment of the "swimming pool" quarters where Mao Zedong had lived in Zhongnanhai and suggested to Li Peng and Yang Shangkun that they stay there ... The swimming pool, which had been open daily to staff of the Central Office and State Council Office, was closed. *Privately, some staff members grumbled, "It seems that the personal safety of this henpecked premier is far more valuable than ours."*

The words "Following up on a suggestion from Li Peng's wife" on the first line should be more accurately translated as "Taking broad hints dropped by Li Peng's wife" so that the meaning of this passage, including the last sentence in italics (present in TS but omitted in TP), is designed to showcase Zhu's ambition and vanity, Luo Gan's grovelling and Li's submission to his wife's wishes. All this is lost in the translation.

7. Zhang gave a similarly qualified response to CNN when questioned about the authenticity of his documents. He said, "I can tell you frankly that all these materials have a solid basis. They are all reliable ... The best answer to the question of authenticity is that time will tell." Only about half way into the interview and responding to a different question does he say that "these materials are authentic." www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2001/tiananmen/TP.html.

Citation. Although TP is a condensed version of TS, virtually all the formal titles of individual documents in it are cited in full whereas in TS they are either simplified or omitted. For example, in TP (p. 78) the “Excerpt from General Political Department, ‘Urgent notice on firmly and thoroughly carrying out Party Central’s policy on upholding stability and unity and taking a clear-cut stand against the turmoil,’ April 26,” is simply referred to in TS (p. 207) as an “emergency notice” from the General Political Department. Similarly, the all-important excerpted document allegedly detailing the Elders’ decision to impose martial law, cited as “Party Central Office Secretariat, ‘Minutes of an important meeting on May 18,’ document supplied to Party Central Office Secretariat for its records by the Office of Deng Xiaoping” contained in TP (p. 204), is simply referred to as “conference records” in TS (p. 480). The devotion of such space to full titles in an abridged version could be a conscious decision to enhance the credibility and believability of TP.

Editorializing. Despite Nathan’s assurance that Zhang “did his best ... not to editorialize” (TP, p. xlii), TS is in fact a documentary collection peppered with Zhang’s personal interpretations, running commentary, analyses and even his reading of the minds of the protagonists. Zhang’s style is very much that of a genre of historical and political novels, dramas and docudrama that is popular in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. In fact, TS’s publisher, Mirror Books, produces many of these historical fictions, as well as memoirs of former politicians, investigative journalism and political analyses that contain the minimum or no citation of sources.⁸

In contrast to TS, TP appears to be more empirical, factual and objective. This is achieved partly by carefully separating the text into two kinds. The first, summaries in bold typeface, are supposed to incorporate Zhang’s “interpretive transitions,” quotations from original documents and elucidations for Western readers. The second are translations of the documents themselves in standard typeface (TP, p. xlii). Most of Zhang’s personal contributions in TS are extracted into these summaries or are expunged, thereby giving the presentation a more neutral gloss. A few examples will illustrate these points.

On the reaction to news of Hu Yaobang’s death, what Zhang writes (TS, pp. 109–110) is translated in TP, p. 23, as a summary in a bold typeface, but the sentence I have put in italics is not translated:

That afternoon, when Zhao Ziyang went to Deng’s home ... to report Hu’s death in person, Deng had recovered from his shock and had already asked his wife Zhuo Lin to telephone Hu’s widow Li Zhao to express condolences ... The news of the death elicited various reactions from other senior leaders ... Chen Yun, who was ill at the time, had little to say ...

8. Mirror Books, now situated in New York, was founded originally in Canada by émigrés. In 1993 I was approached by its editors to translate one of its first books on China’s princelings into English. I declined the offer because of the impossibility of verifying the sources.

Wang Zhen, known for his strong “peasant ideology,” let out a long sigh at the news of Hu’s death. *This sigh revealed not only his mild regret of the untimely death of a kinsman, but also a kind of relief at the demise of an adversary ... the two had been close until the younger Hu became Party general secretary.*

Another example will further illustrate how Zhang’s text is separated into summary and text. On Zhao Ziyang’s decision to resign, Zhang writes (TS, p. 477–78):

After finishing the letter Zhao first sent it to Yang Shangkun, marked “extra urgent.” He wanted to solicit Yang’s opinion before he sent it to the others because Yang was his closest confidant among the party elders. Before making the major decision on his political career, Zhao wanted to double check with Yang.

Yang telephoned Zhao as soon as he had read the letter. He said: “You can’t do this, Ziyang. Why send a letter like this? ...” Zhao Ziyang: “I can’t work with them any more.” Yang Shangkun: “But whatever you do ...”

Yang continued to beseech, “Have you thought about how you’re going to explain this to the nation? ...”

After listening to Yang’s entreaties, Zhao’s agitation was brought under some control, he said: “I’ll think it all over once more, Comrade Shangkun. But right now my chest feels stuffy and my head a bit dizzy ... Please tell the others I’m ill.” Shortly afterward he sent Yang Shangkun another letter ... (Translation from TP slightly altered by author)

In TP, p. 200, the above passages are reformatted into the following (summary in a bold typeface, the rest in standard typeface):

After finishing the letter Zhao first sent it to Yang Shangkun, marked “extra urgent.” He wanted Yang to see it before he sent it to the others because Yang was his closest confidant among the party elders and could help him check the letter for political soundness.

Yang telephoned Zhao as soon as he had read the letter.

Yang Shangkun: “You can’t do this, Ziyang. Why send a letter like this? ...”

Zhao Ziyang: “I can’t work with them any more.”

Yang Shangkun: “But whatever you do ... Have you thought about how you’re going to explain this to the nation? ...”

After listening to Yang’s advice and getting control of his agitation, Zhao said:

“I’ll think it all over once more, Comrade Shangkun. But right now my chest feels stuffy and my head a bit dizzy ... Please tell the others I’m ill.”

Shortly afterward he sent Yang Shangkun another letter.

In the first example above, an obviously interpretive sentence is simply dropped out of the middle of the passage, leaving only text that might be seen as factual and objective. In the second example, quoted material is changed from narrative format to scripting, in the process separating Zhang’s editorial comments from the alleged conversation.⁹ Space limita-

9. Similarly, the reminiscences contained in the narrative reports made by Zhao Ziyang and Li Peng at the Fourth Plenum (June 1989) are extracted to reconstruct their private conversation made on 4 May. This is then presented as scripts in TS (pp. 296–98) and TP (pp. 116–18). This practice goes far in explaining the stilted and unnatural language of the alleged minutes contained in both books.

tions prevent the citing of other examples, but two observations regarding these stylistic alterations can be drawn. Either they are a deliberate editorial decision to shore up the credibility of TP, especially in Western eyes, or they are the editors' efforts to "seek" authenticity by expunging Zhang's embellishments. Readers of either version will probably arrive at different conclusions as to their significance and veracity. More importantly, although Nathan's introduction that prefaces TS and TP asserts authenticity for both, the omissions, editing, reformatting and altering seriously undermine the editors' claims of authenticity.

The Xiao He Challenge: An Assessment

Notwithstanding the reservations raised above, the single most serious challenge to the authenticity of the documents comes from a government employee in China known by the pseudonym of Xiao He.¹⁰ In a series of articles sent to Hong Kong's *Xingdao ribao*, Xiao claims the documents to be forged, because they were collected from open and semi-open sources, and then re-labelled as secret internal documents submitted to the top leadership.¹¹ According to Xiao, he, along with Zhang and several friends decided collectively to write a history on the Tiananmen movement by consulting media reports, books, documents and hearsay. Since the transcripts of leaders' internal talks were unavailable, they turned to collecting fragments of these records. Therefore, the so-called conference records of the Elders, conversations between Yang and Zhao, and between Deng, Yang and Zhao contained in TS were basically reconstructed in this manner.

Other major sources used by the collective consisted of two serial publications by the Xinhua News Agency, the *Guonei dongtai qingyang*

10. The name Xiao He is a play on the name Zhang Liang, as Xiao, Zhang and Han Xin were three most prominent strategists and ministers of the West Han dynasty.

11. The major sources, according to Xiao, are: Guojia jiawei sixiang zhengzhi gongzuo si (ed.), *Jingxin dongpo di 56 tian: 1989 nian 4 yue 15 ri zhi 6 yue 9 ri meiri jishi (Fifty-Six Terrifying Days: A Daily Record of Events from 4 April to 9 June 1989)* (Beijing: Dadi chubanshe, 1989); Guojia jiawei sixiang zhengzhi gongzuo si, Beijing shi weigao deng xue xiao gongzuo weiyuanhui (ed.), *Wushitian di huigu yu fansi (Remembrance and Reflections on the 50 Days)* (Beijing: Gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 1989); Ding Wang, *Liusi qianhou (Before and After 4 June)* (Taibei: Yuanjing chuban shiye gongsi, 1995), 2 vols.; Chen Xiaoya, *Tiananmen zhi bian: bajiu minyun shi (The Crisis at Tiananmen: A History of the June Fourth Democratic Movement)* (Taibei: Fengyun shi dai chuban gufen youxian gongsi, 1996; Bao Zunxin, *Liusi de neiqing: wei wancheng de niepan (The Inside Story of June Fourth: The Unfinished Nirvana)* (Taibei: Fengyun shidai chuban gufen youxian gongsi, 1997); Xu Jiatur, *Xu Jiatur Xianggang huiyilu (Xu Jiatur's Hong Kong Memoirs)* (Hong Kong: Lianhebao youxian gongsi, 1994) 2 vols.; Pang Pang, *Tang xue di Beijing cheng: cong Hu Yaobang zhi si dao Tiananmen beiju (Beijing City Dripping in Blood: From the Death of Hu Yaobang to the Tragedy at Tiananmen)* (Taibei: Fengyun shidai chuban gongsi, 1989); He Zhizhou (ed.), *Xue wo Zhonghua: 89 nian Beijing xuechao ziliao ji xu bian (Blood-Soaked China: A Collection of Materials on the Beijing Student Movement in 1989)* (Hong Kong: Xianggang xinyidai wenhua hui, 1989); Chen Yizi, *Zhongguo: shi nian gaige yu bajiu minyun, Beijing liusi tusha de beihou (China: The Ten Years of Reform and the 1989 Democracy Movement, the Background to the Slaughter During 4 June)* (Taibei: Lianjing chubanshe, 1990); Deng Xiaoping, *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, vol. III (1993). The editors seem to be aware of only the last item. No single library contains all of the above, but I had collected them from different libraries in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Canada and the US.

(*Foundry Proofs of Domestic Developments*) and *Cankao qingyang* (*Reference Proofs*), which came into the hands of one member when he salvaged them from old records destined for destruction. The former consists of drafts of journalist reports and the latter summaries and/or reports of foreign media coverage. Some of these were for public release and others were highly classified intelligence for internal use only. Xiao claims that before their project was completed, Zhang absconded with the fruits of their labour, and not until TP was published in the US did he realize what had happened. Furthermore, he says, Zhang lifted passages from these sources, and re-titled them in TS as reports from the ministries and provincial authorities.¹²

In response, Zhang launched a scathing personal attack on Xiao, called him a “pawn of Luo Gan,”¹³ linked him to part of a repressive campaign to suppress the Tiananmen Papers in China, and claimed that all critics of TS and TP are accomplices of the oppressors.¹⁴ Nathan, on the other hand, replied that Zhang identified Xiao to him as the pen name of a writing group under the State Security Ministry and therefore not credible.¹⁵ Even though he recognized that Xiao poses the “high point of the frontal attack” on the books, he brands Xiao’s charges against Zhang as *ad hominen*, and brushes them off by saying that:

In a major concession, this line of attack acknowledged 95% of the material in the book was accurate, although claiming it was mis-sourced. It focuses on raising doubts about – without directly refuting – the remaining and especially important 5%, consisting of high-level meeting minutes and conversations, material the pseudonymous Xiao He acknowledged never having seen himself ...¹⁶

Such a claim stretches the imagination, for Xiao never conceded anything like the above.¹⁷ Xiao argues forcefully that Zhang had engaged in wholesale forgery by plagiarising, because *all* of the materials in the TS were accumulated from open and semi-open sources, and the minutes and conversations were cut-and paste jobs based on fragments they had collected. Moreover, in our opinion, the “dramatic” piece of evidence which Nathan claims has authenticated the documents – Bao Tong’s “confessions” made in September 1989 to interrogators, which corroborates some details in TS – means little.¹⁸ “Confessions” are extracted not as top secrets to be filed away, but as propaganda tools disseminated to demonstrate repentance and conformity to the correct official line. Indeed, even the confessional defence made by

12. *Xingdao ribao*, 28, 29, 30, 31 May and 1 June 2001.

13. In 2001, Luo was a Politburo member and secretary of the CCP Secretariat in charge of public security.

14. Zhang Liang’s rebuttal is in www.duoweeweek.com/53/Feature/4078.html.

15. Nathan, “The Tiananmen Papers,” p. 732.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Xiao did cite someone who said that since many leaders’ speeches, such as Zhao’s 4 May talks, are in the public record, the most problematic ones are the alleged transcripts of Politburo meetings, conversations by the Elders, etc., and these comprise about 5% of TS. Then Xiao added the rider: “Can this be believed?” (*ci hua xinran*). *Xindao ribao*, 20 May 2001.

18. Nathan, “The Tiananmen Papers,” p. 730.

Bao's superior, Zhao Ziyang, at the Fourth Plenum, is readily available.¹⁹ Overall, Xiao's attack is caustic indeed, as he has essentially charged that Zhang is the Aesopian fox behind the lion who plays fast and loose with the editors' reputation. Yet, whoever Xiao is, and whatever his motivations, the evidence provided by him must be confronted to establish the truth of the matter. On the other hand, the possibility that Xiao was a mouthpiece of the CCP cannot be ruled out, so his charges should not be accepted at face value. In the following, we discuss his evidence, separating his unsubstantiated assertions from the more formidable accusations.

Xiao's less substantiated charges. First, Xiao charges that the decision to publish TP in January and TS later in April 2001, was intended to exploit the reputation of the editors to lend legitimacy, making it difficult for readers of TS to criticize the project. Backing this up is Zhang's own admission that: "The publication of the English version before the Chinese is based entirely on the concern of strategy," because TP can serve "the function of continuous fermentation."²⁰

Secondly, as evidence of deception, Xiao cites an inconsistency in TS (p. 480) which claims that during the morning of 18 May, Deng Xiaoping and the Elders met Politburo Standing Committee (PSC) members and Military Affairs Commission members formally to declare martial law in Beijing. Yet, both the Central Television Station and *Renmin ribao* reported that on that same morning Zhao Ziyang, Li Peng, Hu Qili, and Qiao Shi were visiting fasting students at the hospitals. Nevertheless, a careful reading of TS (p. 476) and TP (p. 199) shows that Zhao, Li, Qiao, Hu *et al.* visited the hospitals at 5 am on 18 May, therefore they might have been able to make it to the PSC meeting at 8.30 am.²¹

Thirdly, Xiao points out that in TP (p. 219) Yang Shangkun said to Deng that "General Xu Haidong has a son named Xu Qinxian who is the chief of the 38th Army." This is a clear mistake Yang would not have made, because he would know the two Xus are not related. This was not noted in TP, but in TS (p. 523) a note claims that Zhang was aware of this. Fourthly, at the 15 April meeting to discuss funeral arrangements for Hu Yaobang, Li Peng is quoted in TP (p. 22) as saying the following: "we should keep a close eye on the universities, especially ones like Peking University. College students are always the most sensitive." Yet, in fact, Li was visiting Japan between 12 and 16 April. In TS (p. 108), Xiao charges, Li's name was "surreptitiously" replaced by that of Zhao Ziyang without explanation.

The above examples are cited by Xiao as evidence of foul play, but Zhang might be given the benefit of the doubt, if one accepts to a limited degree as understandable his desire to use the editors' reputation to

19. For instance, in Yuan Huizhang, *Zhao Ziyang zuihou de jihui (Zhao Ziyang's Last Chance)* (Hong Kong: Mirror Books, 1997), pp. 197–215.

20. Zhang's article is in www.duoweeweek.com/46/Feature3486.html and www.epochtimes.com/gb/1/7/22/n111759.htm

21. According to *Renmin ribao*, 19 May 1989, Zhao *et al.* visited the hospitals at 5 am.

enhance the acceptability and marketability of the books. The second to fourth alleged lapses may well be lapses in editing. Nevertheless, Xiao's other charges of forgery are more formidable and therefore require closer scrutiny.

Xiao's more formidable accusations. According to Xiao, large chunks of the section entitled "Western infiltration, intervention and subversion" (TS, pp. 854–864, or approximately 5,300 Chinese characters; TP, pp. 338–348) have been copied by Zhang from the book *Remembrance and Reflections on the 50 Days*,²² and then given a bogus title as a report submitted by the State Security Ministry to Party Central on 1 June. Zhang also forged the following annotations:

On June 1 the State Security Ministry submitted a report to Party Central on ideological and political infiltration from the West. It had been prepared on instructions from Li Peng, and like the "Emergency Report" of the Beijing Party Committee, it was sent to every member of the Politburo. It was viewed as providing one of the best justifications for the military action that was about to occur.

The large sections in question can indeed be found in *Remembrance*, although the latter does not mention them as part of a Ministry of State Security report. Xiao may be right that Zhang did plagiarize, but it is also possible the authors had used the same documents that had been circulating within the bureaucracy and incorporated into their books. One should be more circumspect on this one, but a more damaging charge follows.

Secondly, Xiao claims that Zhang forged the conversation between Yang Shangkun and Zhao Ziyang on 6 May by drawing from the conversation between Xu Jiatun (director of the Xinhua News Agency in Hong Kong) and Zhao Ziyang on 3 May as recorded in Xu Jiatun's memoirs.²³ According to Xu, he was summoned to Beijing to meet Zhao Ziyang in May, and talked with Zhao for nearly two hours. In the following, we reproduce the relevant passages in TS (pp. 312–14 and TP pp. 122–24) and pinpoint identical and near-identical passages obtainable from Xu's memoirs in italics:

Zhao Ziyang: "Since I got back from North Korea I've been reading to try to get caught up on this situation ... I've felt all along that the main currents are positive: *pro-Party and pro-reform. Many of the young students want to see the reforms go more quickly and the country reach a higher level of democracy.* But although their intentions are good, they can get carried away ..." (Sentence in italics attributed to Xu, in *Xu Jiatun*, p. 370)

Yang Shangkun: "Your speech went over well within the Party. Qiao Shi, Wan Li, Manager Rong and Xu Jiatun all said it was a good speech. It also went over well with the students and with society in general ... *The students' slogans are also prudently put: they endorse the Communist Party and support 'reform and opening.'* In these respects they represent the views of the vast majority. It's also clear that outsiders – diehard liberals, certain foreign forces and anti-communist elements from

22. *Remembrance and Reflections*, pp. 72–85.

23. Xu Jiatun, *Xianggang huiyilu* (see n. 11).

Hong Kong and Taiwan – are putting ideas into the students' heads. But the mainstream of the movement is positive." (Sentences in italics attributed to Xu in *Xu Jiatun*, p. 370)

Zhao Ziyang: "I think if we can handle this movement well, it'll help us advance the reforms."

Yang Shangkun: "*So we should not suppress this movement but guide and divide it: win over the majority of the students and isolate the handful of anti-communists who are intent upon our destruction ...* The students are demanding honest and clean leadership ..." (Sentence in italics attributed to Xu in *Xu Jiatun*, p. 371)

Zhao Ziyang: "I've been thinking about this problem, too. *On the corruption issue, for instance, especially when it involves the children of high-ranking officials, I plan to take the lead. I'm going to write to the Central Government and ask for an investigation of my own children's activities. If they've been corrupt, they should be punished in accordance with the law. The same goes for me personally. In the matter of 'special provisions,' we should ask members of the Standing Committee to begin by giving up their own privileges, although we could keep them for the elder comrades such as Xiaoping, Xiannian and Chen Yun. And we need to reform the system of providing airplanes, trains, and bodyguards for members of the Standing Committee when they travel abroad. We can keep these for the elder comrades, but we need to reduce the transportation costs and the entourages for new members. And the most basic need is to get the Standing Committee of the NPC, as soon as it can, to debate and enact laws against embezzlement, official profiteering, and special privilege.*" (Sentences in italics are made by Zhao to Xu, not Zhao to Yang, according to *Xu Jiatun*, p. 372)

Yang Shangkun: "Xu Jiatun has already told me what you said about this."

Zhao Ziyang: "What I most want to discuss with you today is this idea I have *about the April 26 editorial. I think it's intensified the conflict by calling the protest turmoil. That description may be ill considered. I hear that it shocked a great many officials and citizens when they read it. They disagreed with the content of the editorial and have blamed Comrade Xiaoping. There's even talk that somebody's been trying to push Comrade Xiaoping out front on this problem.* We must protect Comrade Xiaoping's image ..." (Sentences in italics are attributed to Xu, in *Xu Jiatun*, p. 371)

Yang Shangkun: "*I agree ... We must protect Comrade Xiaoping's prestige.*" (Sentence attributed to Zhao, *Xu Jiatun*, p. 371)

Zhao Ziyang: "There are two main tasks before us. One is to persuade Comrade Xiaoping to change his characterization of the student movement; the other is to ask the Standing Committee to reconsider its resolution. What do you think? You and Comrade Xiaoping are old comrades-in-arms. What if you raise the issue with him? I'll work on the Standing Committee." (Remarks made by Zhao to Xu, not Zhao to Yang, and the words "Comrade Xiaoping" in the third last sentence should read "Shangkun," in *Xu Jiatun*, pp. 372–73)

Yang Shangkun: "Let me think about it. You might have some trouble with the Standing Committee."

Zhao Ziyang: "*There shouldn't be any problem with Qiao Shi and Hu Qili, but Yao Yilin and Li Peng might not be receptive.*" (Remarks made by Zhao to Xu, not Zhao to Yang, according to *Xu Jiatun*, p. 373)

Yang Shangkun: "I'll talk to Comrade Xiaoping. You know how he is: he might listen, but he might not. Anyway I'll try." (Statement made by Yang to Xu on 4 May, not Yang to Zhao on 6 May, *Xu Jiatun*, pp. 373–74)

This comparison between Xu's memoir and TS is striking because, as indicated, large sections contained in the former are reproduced word-for-word in the latter, although the conversation between Xu and Zhao is converted to one between Yang and Zhao. Xu says that he wrote his memoir largely by memory and by consulting archival materials.²⁴ There are two possibilities. Either Xu or Zhang is not telling the truth, or both have used the available documents for their own purposes. In any case, Xiao argues that this is not the only case of irregularity in TS. He claims that the speeches allegedly made by Deng Xiaoping and others at Deng's residence on 17 May that appear in TS (pp. 440–46; TP, pp. 184–190) have been stitched together with quotations made by different people at different times and under different circumstances, all available in open sources. Moreover, fragments of speeches originally attributed to certain persons have been freely assigned to others. For instance, statements made by people like Li Peng and Yang Shangkun are attributed to Deng himself. Space limitations do not allow a detailed textual comparison here, but our checking of Xiao's leads finds them to be accurate.²⁵ Moreover, my own research also shows that fragments of the alleged 17 May speeches can be found as well in many more sources than those mentioned by Xiao (see below).

Significantly, Xiao's charges are consistent with the editors' admission that many of the speeches in TS and TP were reconstituted with *ex post facto* recollections, briefings, memoranda of conversations and the like. This cut-and-paste method raises serious questions about sequencing, completeness and accuracy, and there is evidence that Zhang took a great deal of liberty by inserting fragments of conversations into different mouths. Yet Nathan uses these reconstructions to discuss who defers to whom, who speaks infrequently, who speaks briefly and how often they speak, as if they were actual taped conversations (TP, pp. xxx–xxxi). Indeed, the reconstructions of top-level speeches from 1989 are not unique to TS/TP, as examples abound in fictions, histories and memoirs of the era, but the outcomes are always wildly variable pastiches.²⁶

The "Foundry Proofs of Domestic Developments" and "Reference Proofs" are unavailable outside China, but a careful check of Xiao's evidence against what can be collected outside China shows them to be mainly accurate. My research also shows that many similar passages in

24. *Ibid.* pp. ii–iii.

25. A detailed textual analysis of Deng's 17 May speech and other additional materials are available from the author by contacting achan@uwo.ca.

26. For examples of political novels (of varying qualities and seriousness) on the Tiananmen events, complete with detailed reconstructions of dialogue of the alleged meetings of the Elders, see Hu Zhiwei, *Tian'anmen xue'an jingwei* (*The Many Facets of the Tiananmen Massacre*) (Taipei: Zhuanyi wenxue chubanshe, 1990); Chen Yizi, *China: The Ten Years of Reform*; Shu Qi, *Tian'anmen yanyi* (*A Historical Novel of Tiananmen*) (Hong Kong: Liyuan shubao she, 1989), and Chen Xiaoya, *The Crisis at Tiananmen*.

TS can also be obtained from other collections that run to thousands of pages.²⁷ The following are a few examples:

The Truth of Fire and Blood: A Documentary on the Pro-Democracy Movement in Mainland China 1989 (1989), published by the Institute for the Study of Chinese Communist Problems, Taiwan.

Zhang Jingyu, *Ziyou zhi xue, minzhu zhi hua: Zhongguo dalu minzhu de kankelu (The Blood of Freedom, the Flower of Democracy: The Bumpy Road of Democracy on the Chinese Mainland)* (Taipei: Guoli zhengzhi daxue guoji guanxi yanjiu zhongxin, 1989).

Han Shanbi, *Lishi di chuangshang: 1989 Zhongguo minyun ziliao huibian (The Wounds of History: A Collection of Historical Materials on the 1989 Democracy Movement in China*, 2 volumes (Hong Kong: Dongxi wenhua shiye gongsi, 1989). Gongqingtuan Beijing shiwei (ed.), *70 tian dashiji: Hu Yaobang bingshi dao Zhao Ziyang jiezhi (Major Events Over 70 Days: From the Death of Hu Yaobang to the Dismissal of Zhao Ziyang)* (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1990).

Taken together, these materials and those mentioned by Xiao (see note 11) fall into four categories: detailed daily and hourly chronicles of events in Beijing and the provinces published by the Chinese government for “internal circulation only” (*Fifty-six Horrifying Days; Remembrance and Reflections; Major Events*); memoirs of participants (*Inside Story*); histories of the movement (*Before and After; Crisis; Beijing City; China: The Ten Years*), and collections of documents edited by Taiwan or Hong Kong organizations (*Blood of Freedom; Truth of Fire and Blood; Blood-Soaked China*). They represent some of the most important sources essential for any serious research on the Tiananmen Movement. The availability of these sources does not necessarily invalidate Zhang’s claim that he obtained his documents contemporaneously with events. It does show, however, that these documents had been either released officially or obtained clandestinely so that many others are able to draw on them in compiling their histories or fictions. More importantly, the fact that the editors appear unaware of these materials – not a word about them is mentioned in either TS or TP – may have marred their judgement. If the editors were aware of these materials, it was their responsibility to inform their readers. At a minimum, since these sources contain numerous identical or near-identical passages from TS, the editors’ assertion that TS could not have been reconstructed by research, and that these materials were only available to a “tiny handful of people in China” may have to

27. For instance, the description and wordings of Hu Yaobang’s collapse on 8 April 1989 contained in TS (pp. 106–107) and TP (pp. 20–22) are very similar to the dramatized and fictionalized scene found in Pang Pang, *Hu Yaobang zhi si (The Death of Hu Yaobang)* (Hong Kong: Dadi chubanshe, 1989) pp. 12–15. A disparate version can be found in Tian Guoliang and Sun Dafen, *Hu Yaobang zhuan (A Biography of Hu Yaobang)* (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi ziliao chubanshe, 1989), pp. 214–15. Very similar wordings about the intellectuals’ mediation on 14 May 14 in TS (pp. 390–95) and TP (pp. 165–69) can be found in Dai Qing’s memoir, *Zai Qincheng zuolao: ziji de gushi er (Serving Time at Qincheng Prison: My Own Story)* (Hong Kong: Ming bao chubanshe, 1995), pp. 73–89. See also, Bao Zunxin, *The Inside Story of June Fourth*, pp. 101–114.

be qualified. This lapse also casts serious doubt on the validity of their authentication process.

Another Formidable Challenge

A more damaging charge has been made by an anonymous commentator on the internet who claims that large sections in TS and TP are plagiarized from the book, *Gangtie de budui: lujun di sanshiba jituanjun junshi* (*The Army of Steel: A Military History of the Ground Force's 38th Army*).²⁸ This book, which is classified material, is unavailable, but the relevant chapter was reproduced in the April 1994 issue of *Beijing Spring*.²⁹ This chapter, entitled "Maintain order at the capital, protect the venues of the Asian Games, return to the barracks in triumph," describes how the 38th Army stationed in Beijing had, *between 19 June 1989 and 26 October 1990*, maintained stability and ensured the successful staging of the several major party meetings, the commemorative celebrations of 1 July, 1 August, 1 October and the Asia Games.

In TS and TP, however, this text has been transformed into a report from martial law troops headquarters submitted to the Politburo on 1 June to show that they were "spiritually and physically" ready to clear Tiananmen Square, and that they "told the top decision makers that the choice was now theirs." Then many paragraphs are lifted from *Army of Steel* to comprise the report in TP, pp. 349–353 (TS, pp. 866–69), with only minor changes in wording. For instance, the words "group army" are changed to "martial law troops," but the two were not the same, since the martial law troops consisted of more than the 38th Army. The charge of plagiarism is more credible here, as it is hard to imagine that the martial laws headquarters would forge a report to the Politburo, or that the Literary Press of the People's Liberation Army would pirate a 1 June directive to describe events many weeks later. This poses a serious challenge to Zhang's TS, because in academic work, one instance of plagiarism would have been sufficient to discredit the entire project.

Conclusion

The entire Tiananmen Papers project was fundamentally flawed from the beginning. Since the documents were made available under such mysterious circumstances, and since the editors had made the extraordinary claim that they were restricted to a small group of top leaders, authenticity ought to be the foremost concern. The simplest way to remain faithful to the original documents would be for the editors to select and translate them individually without alteration, but the editors opted for some questionable editorial practices. They did not insist on having access to (let alone authenticate) the original documents as a

28. (Beijing: Jiefangjun wenyi chubanshe, 1993). Cpcliusi in www.hjclub.com/TextBody/35530.asp, posted on 2 February 2002.

29. Pp. 7–12.

condition of co-operation with Zhang, but condoned extensive editing and retouching that resulted in two significantly different versions of the documents, TS and TP. Judging by TS and many articles Zhang has written since 2001 (mostly available on the internet), he is neither a trained historian nor social scientist, and his style is closer to that of a writer of historical fiction or a polemicist. Driven by a strong conviction, he may have viewed the cut-and-paste method as legitimate when used to buttress what he perceives to be a just cause. The editors may not have been fully aware of the implications of Zhang's political agenda, expressed only as a desire to repudiate the official evaluation of the 1989 events and to accelerate political change in China.

On the other hand, the editors present the documents as academics, and therefore their standards must be set higher. Yet, their verification efforts are undermined by their faulty editorial policies, their hazy assumptions of authenticity, their unfamiliarity with key Chinese sources and their misplaced trust on the pseudonymous Zhang Liang. Clearly, it is possible to reconstruct many of the documents, as we have demonstrated, with open sources available outside China, not to mention those within China itself. All things considered, we have little confidence regarding the provenance of the documents contained in TS and TP, and we feel that Zhang has misled his editors. However, since the final verification of any of these is impossible until the Chinese government opens the archives, Zhang can no longer hide behind the spurious excuse of patriotism – he owes it to his editors and the readers to unlock his trove for scholarly scrutiny.

Rejoinder to Alfred L. Chan*

Andrew J. Nathan

My co-editor Perry Link and I join Alfred Chan in rejecting a “just-trust-us attitude” toward questions of authenticity and editorial procedures. That is why I explained our reasoning on both of these issues in detail in the introduction to *The Tiananmen Papers* (I will follow Chan in abbreviating it TP). The introduction lays out our reasons for believing in the authenticity of the material published in *Zhongguo “liusi” zhenxiang* (abbreviated in Professor Chan’s essay and here as TS). It tells readers how and why TP differs from this Chinese-language work on which it is based. As Professor Chan notes, we have consistently welcomed scholars to review critically both authenticity and editorial issues.

Of the two sets of issues, authenticity is the more important. I will show that the questions Professor Chan raises, properly analysed, should enhance readers’ confidence in the authenticity of TS. As for the editorial decisions that Professor Chan disagrees with, I need only elaborate briefly the explanations already given in the introduction.

Professor Chan recently published a similar critique of the editorial decisions and authentication procedures that Bruce Gilley and I used in producing *China’s New Rulers*. Accordingly, my responses to his criticisms of the Tiananmen book resemble my responses to his criticisms of the *New Rulers* book.¹

Authenticity

Following the pseudonymous Xiao He, Professor Chan suggests that TS was a compilation from “open and semi-open” sources, rather than a selection from a set of never-before-revealed documents.

Xiao He (who Zhang Liang believes to be a writing group within the special team set up by the Ministry of State Security to investigate TP and TS, and who Professor Chan himself says may be a “mouthpiece of the CCP”) claimed that he and a small group of other people knew Zhang Liang’s identity and participated with him in compiling a group of documents from authentic but secret sources, and that Zhang absconded with these documents and then added some forged documents of his own to concoct TS. Professor Chan finds it odd that I have not said more to address the issues raised by this writer. In fact, I did discuss Xiao He’s

* I am grateful for the contributions of Perry Link, Orville Schell and Zhang Liang in preparing this article.

1. Alfred L. Chan, “China’s fourth generation: the new rulers and the secret files,” *The China Journal*, No. 50 (July 2003), pp. 107–120; Andrew J. Nathan and Bruce Gilley, “Response,” *The China Journal*, No. 50 (July 2003), pp. 121–25.

article in “An editor’s reflections,”² but only briefly. I said that Xiao He’s argument, although false, nevertheless amounts to the tacit acknowledgment that 95 per cent of the material in TS is true. I did not say more about Xiao He subsequently because his charges are intrinsically implausible and have never generated any response, follow-up or significant debate. In calling Xiao He’s articles the “high point” of the attack on TP, I meant only to underscore the Chinese government’s inability to attack the book in any effective way.

After all, how can the sources Xiao He claims to know about be both “open and semi-open” and yet remain to this day “unavailable outside China”? Why have not Xiao He and his colleagues identified Zhang? Why have they not published additional documents from their purported sources as a way of establishing their bona fides? Why has not Xiao He or one of his colleagues responded to Zhang Liang’s refutation of his charges? Why has there been no response to the even more detailed rebuttal published by a self-described friend of Zhang Liang, writing under the pen name of Yan Zhen, in a series of articles which Professor Chan does not mention even though I referred to them in a footnote in “Editor’s reflections”?³ Xiao He’s claims disappeared without a trace – until now, when they are resurrected by Professor Chan.

Professor Chan himself dismisses most of Xiao He’s arguments as “less substantiated.” With respect to the puzzling 5 am hospital visit, Professor Chan presents both the riddle and its solution. As regards the wrong identification of Xu Qinxian as a son of Xu Haidong, the story behind this episode only confirms the authenticity of Zhang Liang’s materials. The attribution of a relationship is indeed an error. Zhang Liang pointed that fact out to me at the time that Perry Link and I were translating the work. I made an editorial decision, which I now regret, not to write a footnote saying that the text of the original document contained this error. My thinking at the time was that the documents might contain any number of errors that we were not aware of – see the introduction, p. xxi – that we should not footnote some without others, and that footnoting all errors was beyond our competence. Zhang Liang thought about contacting the “friend of Yang Shangkun” who provided this particular piece of source material to find out the source of the mistake, but decided that it would be too dangerous to do so. In his integrity, he decided not to tamper with the document that was provided to him and therefore preserved the error in his text.

Similarly, the English edition identifies Li Peng instead of Zhao Ziyang as the person who made a certain remark at a 15 April meeting. This reflected a copying error when the Chinese text was entered into the computer-file manuscript of TS. Zhang Liang noticed and corrected the mistake before the Chinese edition was published and before anyone else

2. “*The Tiananmen Papers: an editor’s reflections*,” *The China Quarterly*, No. 167 (September 2001), pp. 724–737.

3. Yan Zhen’s article is still available on the web, at Duoweinews.com, although only to Duowei members. The URL of the first segment is <http://67.93.255.241:8080/duowei/exec/news/NewsView?id=276161>, and the other segments follow on from that one.

brought it to his attention. His ability to do so is evidence of his reliability. Professor Chan, however, repeats Xiao He's charge that "Li's name was 'surreptitiously' replaced by that of Zhao Ziyang without explanation." This charge is puzzling on its face, since the only reason to make such a "surreptitious" replacement would be to correct a discovered error.

Apart from the weakness of Xiao He's objections to particular passages in TS and the implausibility of his scenario for how TS came into existence, the kind of comparison of texts that Professor Chan suggests between TS and other available publications demonstrates that TS cannot have been compiled from any combination of previously available, non-secret sources. Professor Chan lists four collections of previously-published documents in his text and another ten books (not all documentary collections) in a footnote as possible sources for the material in TS. With the assistance of Zhang Liang, I compared TS to the most voluminous of the documentary collections cited by Professor Chan (the 583-page documents section of the 1300-odd-page *Truth of Fire and Blood*, compiled by Taiwan intelligence); plus five other works that Chan cites (Han Shanbi's *Lishi de chuangshang* (*The Wounds of History*), Deng Xiaoping's selected works, *Remembrance and Reflections on the 50 Days*, Ding Wang's *Liusi qianhou* (*Before and After 4 June*), and Xu Jiaturun's memoirs⁴; plus the three English-language collections that Perry Link and I systematically footnoted in TP.⁵ It did not seem worthwhile to go beyond these nine works because they overlap to a large degree. Indeed, *Truth of Fire and Blood* contains everything that can be found in any of the other eight works except for a few items in the Deng works and some conversations reported in the Xu memoirs.

On this basis, 82.3 per cent of the documents transcribed in whole or in part in TS are not available from any other source. The nine comparison works among them contain in whole or in part only 141 of the 798 documents that are transcribed in whole or in part in TS, or 17.7 per cent of the total. Many of these were public to begin with, such as student handbills and the government's declaration of martial law. Others were leaked at the time of the events, and some were published by the government subsequently (such as some of Deng Xiaoping's statements). Few of these materials are of central importance to the story of elite decision-making during the Tiananmen crisis.

By contrast, the never-before-published materials in TS include the most crucial and sensitive documents of the Tiananmen events. Among them are the minutes of six meetings of the Elders, the minutes of nine Politburo Standing Committee meetings, the minutes of three Politburo

4. For citations, please see Prof. Chan's article.

5. Han Minzhu (ed.), *Cries for Democracy: Writings and Speeches from the 1989 Democracy Movement* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990); Suzanne Ogden, Kathleen Hartford, Lawrence Sullivan and David Zweig (eds.), *China's Search for Democracy: The Student and the Mass Movement of 1989* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1992); and Michel Oksenberg, Lawrence R. Sullivan and Marc Lambert (eds.), *Beijing Spring, 1989, Confrontation and Conflict: The Basic Documents* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1990).

meetings, five documents provided by a friend of Yang Shangkun, eleven key documents from the Fourth Plenum of the 13th Central Committee, two letters written by Zhao Ziyang, two letters written by Yang Shangkun, one letter written by Lu Dingyi, minutes of three of Deng Xiaoping's six meetings with the Politburo, 32 documents from the military system including the Central Military Commission, the Martial Law Command, the General Political Department, the Navy, the Air Force, the Beijing Garrison and five military districts, and 209 out of 219 reports from provincial-level Party and government authorities. The list could go on, but there is no space for it here since it runs to 657 never-before-published documents. Had any of these high-level materials been circulated on even a limited basis among officials inside China prior to the publication of TS, we can be sure that they would long since have leaked with great fanfare to the outside world.

But why then did Zhang Liang in TS, and Perry Link and I in TP, republish some documents that were already available? We did so simply in order to produce a coherent account of events for our readers (introduction, p. xliii). Additional considerations were that including the documents in TS served to confirm their authenticity, while including them in TP allowed us to offer translations that might improve upon those already available.

And why did Link and I limit our citations in TP to the three main English-language collections of such already-available materials? Professor Chan illogically assumes that because we cited the English-language collections we did not know that Chinese collections existed. In fact, we were aware of most of the Chinese works that he cites (not all of which, as already noted, are documentary collections). We chose the English-language collections for our citations because we thought that these would be the most helpful to our English-language readers.

Might the 657 never-before-published documents simply have been fabricated (not that Professor Chan suggests this)? I argued in the introduction (p. xx) that it should be harder to believe in the possibility of fabrication on such a scale and with such sophistication than in the possibility that someone actually obtained authentic materials and published them. The passage of time has only strengthened this argument. TS names 683 persons, more than any other publication on the events, many of them not named in any other known source. The names include those of persons reported as arrested, injured or killed in various incidents, officials in government, Party and military service in 1989, activists who later came overseas, and foreigners involved in or reporting on the events or who were interviewed by or spied on by Chinese agencies overseas. Such a high degree of specificity would have given ample ground for fabrications to be pointed out in the nearly three years since the publication of the book. The Chinese government could have pointed them out. Xiao He could have done so. Persons named in the book could have come forward to deny the facts relating to themselves. But none of this has happened. Instead, people have attested to the authenticity of the materials that touch upon their own experiences with respect to facts that

could not have been known to the Compiler in any other way than from real Party and government materials. Concrete examples are given in “An editor’s reflections.”

Among the post-publication confirmations that I mentioned there, Professor Chan dismisses the importance of one of them, the Bao Tong confession, by saying that such confessions are used for propaganda purposes and hence may long have been known inside China. That may apply to some confessions, but not this one. The Bao Tong confession has never been circulated by the Chinese government, and its release by a private source, not the government, came after, not before, the publication of TP.

In short, the material in TS cannot have been drawn from published sources. It cannot have been fabricated. And the notion that it came from a group effort to compile materials from an internal publication that is at once top secret yet available through purchase from a garbage recycler is fantastic.

Professor Chan is right to note that I did not base my judgement of the authenticity of the materials on the inspection of physical documents, a point I made clear in the introduction. Authentication using physical documents would have endangered the Compiler (introduction, pp. xix-xx). In any case, I would not have been able to conduct the chemical and other physical assays necessary to distinguish high-quality forged documents from real documents. Authentication therefore relied chiefly on the person of Zhang Liang as well as on textual content (introduction, p. xx; “Editor’s reflections,” pp. 728–29). Although I could not and cannot share the details of my authentication procedure with readers, the passage of time has shown that my authentication methodology was sound. I am confident that Zhang Liang and his materials are authentic.

Three Not So Formidable Challenges

Professor Chan considers two of Xiao He’s charges to be more “formidable” than the others, and adds a third challenge that he considers formidable from the internet.

First, Xiao He points out that some of the same material appears in a document in TS/TP and in a section of an officially-published book called *Remembrance and Reflections on the 50 Days*. As Professor Chan himself notes, “it is ... possible the authors had used the same documents ...” That is indeed clearly the case, a fact which again confirms the authenticity of TS.

But careful comparison between TS and *50 Days* shows that of the two published versions of this original document, the TS version is more authentic than the *50 Days* version. The latter omits a section that is included in the TS version (TS, pp. 857–58, TP, pp. 341–43, section 3), and, as it happens, the authenticity of this omitted section is demonstrable by independent corroboration. The section describes American (including CIA) efforts to extend feelers to the Chinese leadership, the visit of a State Council official to the United States, and some activities of a

China-based foundation supported by George Soros. I was an adviser to Soros in the foundation activities described here. No one outside official Chinese circles could have known anything about these activities except those few in China and the West who were directly involved. In other words, the Compiler could not have forged this section of the document (and I can assure readers that I did not forge it either).

Why did *50 Days* excise this section in its version of the document? As TS points out (pp. 864–65), this section was so sensitive that it formed the basis of a report by the Minister of Public Security to the Fourth Plenum of the 13th Central Committee on Western efforts to carry out peaceful evolution in China. But for obvious reasons, it must have been too sensitive for a Chinese official publisher to put into the public domain. Thus, while both TS and *50 Days* contain material from an authentic document, it is only TS that reproduces the document in unadulterated form.

Secondly, Professor Chan repeats Xiao He's accusation that a conversation between Zhao Ziyang and Yang Shangkun reported in TS may have been reconfigured from a passage in Xu Jiatun's memoirs in which Xu recalls a conversation between himself and Zhao. This suspicion is based on the claim that the two texts are full of "identical and near-identical passages." Yet in fact there are no identical or near-identical passages in the two texts. For example, Professor Chan's first allegedly identical passage reads as follows in the two texts.

TS version (p. 312): "I continue to feel that the mainstream of this student movement is good, that it supports the party and supports reform. Many young students hope that the pace of reform can go a bit faster, that the level of state democratization can be a little higher. Their subjective wishes are good, but their words and actions are too extreme"

Xu version (Xu, p. 370): "This is a patriotic movement, it is a movement to support the reform of the Chinese Communist Party; there are some people who are hoping that the reform can develop another step, there are some people who are concerned that the reform may stop, or even regress."

That these passages contain similar ideas is not remarkable. In his effort to form a consensus around his view that the student movement was patriotic and constructive, Zhao discussed the issue with many leaders, including Xu, who as a minister-level official was an appropriate conversation partner for the premier. Indeed, the TS account of Zhao's conversation with Yang has Yang saying to Zhao, "Xu Jiatun has already told me what you said about this." That Zhao covered much of the same ground and used many of the same ideas to discuss the same set of complicated issues with different interlocutors in the same short period of time is to be expected. If anything, it is surprising that he used such different language in two nearly simultaneous conversations on such a sensitive topic.

Thirdly, Professor Chan retails an accusation from "an anonymous commentator on the internet." This commentator has noticed that "large sections" of a chapter in a book published in China called *Gangtie de*

budui (*The Army of Steel*) also appear in TS, with “minor changes in wording.” Indeed, Zhang Liang confirms that *The Army of Steel* was a *neibu* work based on authentic sources. Precisely because it inappropriately excerpted sensitive documents from the Tiananmen events, it was withdrawn from circulation one week after publication, is unavailable outside China, and is known to the outside world only through the reprint of this single chapter in *Beijing Spring*. Those facts immediately suggest that any overlap between the two works confirms the authenticity of the material in TS. The question, however, is who borrowed from whom. The answer is that the book published by the Chinese military borrowed from the military documents used in TS.

To demonstrate this point I have to relate some close details of the two works. The chapter from *The Army of Steel* printed in *Beijing Spring* is about 18,000 characters in length – nine closely-printed, double-columned, magazine-sized pages. Within this one finds a short passage from TS (TS, pp. 866–69, TP, pp. 349–353) that consists of 1,720 characters in the original, running about a page in *Beijing Spring*. The passage in question, however, has been enlarged in *The Army of Steel* so that it runs to 2,281 characters (*Beijing Spring*, top of p. 14 to top of p. 15).

Comparison of the two texts shows how this borrowing by *The Army of Steel* from the document quoted in TS took place. The original TS text is a report by the Martial Law Headquarters, dated 1 June 1989, on its troops’ readiness to carry out orders to suppress the students. It sketches how the martial law troops had prepared for their mission in terms of ideological training, security training, discipline, and “mass work” (public relations) among civilians. The *Army of Steel* passage, for its part, is a report on the fulfilment of a series of tasks over a 16-month period after the crackdown, embedded in a longer chapter on the achievements of one of the core military units of the martial law troops, the 38th Group Army. True to Chinese (and not only Chinese) bureaucratic tradition, the author of the later document copied the language of the earlier document into his report as a framework for describing how the early June preparations were continued into later months. The internet commentator’s reverse theory of borrowing is unconvincing, as it would require a forger to cut passages out of the 38th Group Army’s implementation report in order to fake the earlier report on the martial law troops’ preparations for action.

Moreover, overlooked by Professor Chan’s internet source is the existence of a second passage in the reprinted *Army of Steel* chapter that also comes from a document excerpted in TS, although not the same document. This time *The Army of Steel* copies from an 8 June report from the 38th Group Army to the Central Military Commission on its heroic performance in clearing Tiananmen Square (TS, pp. 937–940, TP, pp. 390–91, *Beijing Spring*, p. 8). This second piece of borrowing helps to confirm my argument about the first piece of borrowing. The institutional biographers of the 38th Group Army included passages from various documents accessible to them when they compiled their chapter

on the unit's performance during and after Tiananmen. No doubt this kind of borrowing from documents goes on throughout the entire book, although the source documents are never identified.

Throughout his essay Professor Chan alludes to various other challenges to the authenticity of TS that he says he has checked out. I will wait for the details of those challenges before responding to them.

Editorial Issues

Professor Chan disagrees with a number of the editorial and translation decisions that Perry Link and I made in producing the English-language TP from the Chinese-language TS. I need address these issues only briefly, since I have already explained the reasons for almost all of them in the Introduction to TP. In any case, the main thing to note is that no matter how wrong Link's and my editorial decisions may have been, they have no bearing on the authenticity of TS.

- Professor Chan is wrong to describe TS as “a heavily condensed, merged and summarized history using these [documentary] sources.” Wholly unlike *yanyi*-style narratives, the book consists almost entirely (about 90 per cent) of full or partial transcriptions from documents, in the documents' original wording. These are linked by brief bridging sections written by the Compiler. Most of these bridging sections are dry and circumstantial, providing the date of each document, its bureaucratic source, the number of similar documents issued that day, and something of the context. Only a small fraction of Zhang Liang's bridging passages read in any sense as narrative, and these employ a narrative style widely found in Chinese historical writing.
- TP in turn preserves the character of TS as a documentary collection with bridging material. In order to shorten the book, however, Perry Link and I had to write longer passages of bridging material into which we absorbed information from the Compiler's linking segments, information from the documents that we had to cut out, and background information that we provided to help foreign readers understand the context of what they were reading. This is explained in the introduction (pp. xlii-xliii).
- Any “losses in translation” from TS to TP, including the occasional flattening of style, occurred as the result of making necessary choices about what to include and what to leave out in order to reduce the size of the book by two-thirds. Those losses should not be worrying, because scholars have access to the full Chinese text.
- In TP, we added source citations that were not in TS, but which the Compiler possessed and provided to us. This again is explained in the introduction (p. xliii), as are the reasons why Zhang Liang chose to leave the citations out of the Chinese edition (p. xx).
- Regarding the publication of the English book first and the Chinese book second (another issue Professor Chan borrows from Xiao He), I explained some of the reasons for this order of publication in the

introduction, p. xxi. An additional reason not mentioned there is that Zhang Liang wanted the publication of the Chinese edition timed so as to commemorate the death of Hu Yaobang.

- As a translator, I do not agree with Professor Chan that we changed the meaning of Zhang Liang's claim of authenticity in his preface when we rendered it into English. Although Professor Chan's translation is more literal, in my judgement its intended meaning is not as clear in English as our version. For what it is worth, Zhang Liang reviewed and approved our translation of his preface.
- Professor Chan misunderstands what I said in the introduction about the reconstruction of conversations (p. xli). This passage of the introduction requires careful reading, but it is clear. The reconstructed conversations are based on four kinds of highly sensitive internal Party documentary sources, and are as reliable as those sources. This means – as I said in the introduction – that in my judgement they are highly reliable, but they are not the same as direct transcripts. It is wrong to refer to the reconstruction procedure as “cut and paste,” but even if this term were appropriate, it would not affect the material's authenticity.

I welcome Professor Chan's contribution to what should be a long and careful effort by scholars to scrutinize the authenticity of the Tiananmen documents. For readers who have had trouble following the details of our discussion, three conclusions should stand out. Professor Chan has raised questions about only a few of the 798 documents in TS. He has himself explained away most of the doubts that he raised. And in the remaining cases he has pointed to evidence that properly interpreted confirms the authenticity of the material in TS.