

## Book Reviews

- China's Students: The Struggle for Democracy.* By RUTH CHERRINGTON. [London: Routledge, 1991. 239 pp. £30.00.]
- The Iron House: A Memoir of the Chinese Democracy Movement and the Tiananmen Massacre.* By MICHAEL S. DUKE. [Lytton, Utah: Gibbs Smith, Peregrine Smith Books, 1990. 180 pp. \$7.95.]
- The Road to Tiananmen Square.* By CHARLIE HORE. [London: Bookmarks, 1991. 159 pp. £4.95.]
- The Death of Hu Yaobang.* By PANG PANG, translated by Si REN. [Hawaii: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Hawaii, 1989. 74 pp.]
- The Pro-Democracy Protests in China: Reports from the Provinces.* Edited by JONATHAN UNGER. [Armonk, New York & London: M. E. Sharpe Inc., 1991. 239 pp. Hard cover \$35.00, paperback \$15.95.]
- Tiananmen: China's Struggle for Democracy, Its Prelude, Development, Aftermath, and Impact.* Edited with an introduction by WINSTON L. Y. YANG and MARSHA L. WAGNER. [Baltimore: School of Law, University of Maryland, 1990. 314 pp. \$8.00.]

These six books are all contributions to the growing literature on Tiananmen. Each of them, except *The Death of Hu Yaobang*, includes eyewitness accounts of the events of 3–4 June 1989. Despite the proliferation of such reports by foreign academics and journalists as well as Chinese participants in the democracy movement this reviewer is disappointed by the absence thus far of any serious effort to bring together the various, and sometimes conflicting, accounts of what happened. Until someone attempts a detailed review of the existing literature anyone interested in understanding the events leading up to the massacre and its aftermath must consult a number of sources.

*China's Students* and *The Iron House* both provide useful background to the attitudes of Chinese students and intellectuals in the 1980s. Both authors are clearly close to their Chinese colleagues and familiar with their grievances over poor conditions and frustration with the restrictive intellectual climate. Duke's lively style makes his a highly readable book but the first-person narrative of events leading up to Tiananmen unfortunately gives way to a compilation of eyewitness accounts for the night of 3–4 June, Duke having returned to Beijing University campus in the afternoon. Duke admits in an acknowledgement of sources that the eyewitness accounts he reports all support the opinion, challenged by many, that there was a bloodbath on Tiananmen Square.

The debate about the extent of the killings on or near Tiananmen Square is not taken up in any of the other accounts. The highly symbolic nature of Tiananmen and the authorities' assertion that no one was killed on the square sound a cautionary note to anyone hoping to untangle the various reports of what happened. The

eyewitness accounts included in the Yang and Wagner collection are reprints of articles by American journalists. David Aikman in "The battle of Beijing" highlights another area of disagreement. Various reports refer to anything from 700 to 10,000 deaths that night. Aikman concludes that in a 24-hour period between 1,000 and 5,000 people were killed.

While much will remain unknown about the details of the massacre, the demonstrations that preceded it and the following crackdown mark a watershed in China's political development. The emphasis of most accounts has been on the role of the students and the events in Beijing. The Unger volume (and the most useful book in this collection) attempts to redress the balance with reports of the pro-democracy demonstrations that took place around the country. These serve to underline the extent of dissatisfaction with the political system but they also illustrate the variation in the regional response to the Beijing protests. Unger in his excellent introduction suggests that the lack of any major protest movement in Guangzhou is a reflection of the economic success of the region and its citizens' reluctance to rock the boat. By contrast the extent of popular protest in China's interior illustrates frustration that the benefits of economic reform have by-passed this part of the country. This view may contradict those who argue that economic development will inevitably lead to calls for greater political freedoms. Some of the most interesting accounts in this volume discuss the role of the *getihus*. Anita Chan and Jonathan Unger consider the grievances of these young entrepreneurs and how they saw participation in the protest movement as a chance to improve their image. In their article, which is one of the most helpful of the collection, they explore the difficult relations between the students and the other protesters. The tactical failure to present a united front must have been a relief to the authorities who feared a Solidarity-style uprising.

The role of the working class in the demonstrations and the emergence of autonomous workers' organizations is ignored by Cherrington and the Yang and Wagner collection despite its claims to be a definitive account. In contrast Charlie Hore, writing from the perspective of the Socialist Workers' Party, gives prominence in his account to the role of the workers in the protest movement and also highlights the failure of the student leaders to recognize the value of an organized opposition movement within the factories. This book treats the history of modern China from a socialist perspective. In the light of the collapse of communist regimes around the world Hore is quick to demonstrate that the revolution of 1949 was nationalist rather than socialist. In the demonstrations 40 years later he sees hope for real socialist change in China and there is frequent reference to the example of Solidarity and to the image of Chinese workers manning the barricades.

Understandably all the accounts are sympathetic to the aims of the students and four of the books are dedicated to the victims of political repression in China. At times support for the students has perhaps hindered a dispassionate treatment of their actions and objectives. Chan and Unger, however, recount an interview with a Chinese dissident who had fled to Hong Kong and spoke of the inclination

among some students “to re-enact the Red Guard movement.” In one example a group of students had organized themselves into the “Guang’an County Association” with a view to visiting Deng’s home county and digging up his ancestor’s tombs. On arrival in the village they were reputedly met by two military detachments and arrested.

Geremie Barmé also sounds a sceptical note in his article “Beijing days, Beijing nights” in the Unger volume. He finds the melodrama surrounding the students on water strike clearly somewhat disconcerting: “the scene resembled something of a charmed circle, or a grisly mandala, or even an altar. There was something mildly obscene and morbid about it all.” With his good contacts with the Beijing intelligentsia Barmé’s excellent account gives an insight into the relationship between the students, intellectuals and the government. The complexity of the power struggle being waged in Beijing is revealed in the role of honest broker played by the journalist Dai Qing, adopted daughter of Marshal Ye Jianying, and later imprisoned for writing her account of the movement.

A bizarre addition to this collection on Tiananmen is the book by Pang Pang on the death of Hu Yaobang. The introduction hails this as an example of a new journalism in China and places it in the tradition of reportage developed by Liu Binyan and Wang Ruowang. This is an over generous description for the fly-on-the-wall school of literature. Pang Pang purports to describe the final days of Hu Yaobang but nothing in the introduction to the book gives us a clue as to whether his insight is the result of privileged access or a fertile imagination. The text suffers from a poor translation and a melodramatic turn of phrase but there is some unintentional humour as someone remarks “China is actually tightly controlled by a dwarf.”

The abundance of writing on Tiananmen does not guarantee quality and the reader is advised to proceed warily. Most satisfactory in this collection are the two edited volumes which at least offer both eyewitness accounts and an attempt at analysis.

NICOLA MACBEAN

*After Deng, What? Will China Follow the USSR?* By A. DOAK BARNETT. [Washington, D.C.: Johns Hopkins Foreign Policy Institute Papers, 1991. 23 pp.]

The dramatic collapse of the Soviet Union has revived questioning about the long-term viability of the PRC. This is reinforced by the uncertainty over the succession to Deng Xiaoping. It is a subject of direct interest to a very wide range of people, from policy-makers to businessmen and journalists, and academics and students. They will naturally turn for answers to the doyen of American China-watchers.

From the point of view of Beijing, Barnett is reassuring. He emphasizes that China will certainly go its own way, and probably not that of the Soviet Union. The path will be unpredictable, with abrupt changes of course, but it will be distinctively different. He bases this argument upon the success of economic reform in China compared