

## Book Reviews

*Le tremblement de terre de Pékin.* By JEAN-PHILIPPE BEJA, MICHEL BONNIN and ALAIN PEYRAUBE. [Paris: Gallimard, 1991. 588 pp. FF 195.00. ISBN 2 07 072211 2.]

*Tiananmen Aftermath: Human Rights in the People's Republic of China, 1990.* By JOHN F. COPPER and TA-LING LEE. [Baltimore: School of Law, University of Maryland, 1992. 148 pp. \$15.00. ISSN 0730 0107, ISBN 0 925153 22 2.]

*Tiananmen Square Spring 1989. A Chronology of the Chinese Democracy Movement.* By THEODORE HAN and JOHN LI. [Berkeley: Center for Chinese Studies, University of California, 1992. \$10.00. ISBN 1 55729 034 4.]

*China's Search for Democracy. The Student and the Mass Movement of 1989.* Edited by SUZANNE OGDEN, KATHLEEN HARTFORD, LAWRENCE SULLIVAN and DAVID ZWEIG. [Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1992. 451 pp. \$17.95. ISBN 0 87332 724 1.]

The movement of spring 1989 has given rise to a wide range of publications. These four books are representative of the variety. *Le Tremblement de terre de Pékin* aims, in reference to the analysis of Simon Leys, to show that democracy is not an anachronism in China. For the authors, the behaviour of the Chinese since 1949 can be understood only in terms of a search for democracy. Hence the Tiananmen Square movement is the most important and the clearest expression of this aspiration. The issue is not knowing if China is "ripe" for democracy but knowing how to overthrow a regime which prevents the building of a democratic political system. The problem with this analysis is that it lacks accuracy. First, the concept of democracy is not defined. What is democracy? Are democratic elections a guarantee of democracy? Does market economy mean democracy? Secondly, the Tiananmen movement is mainly described as a mass movement. The difference in behaviour, action and objectives between the social segments which composed the movement are not considered as crucial. Nevertheless, the book is a useful introduction to the events of 1989 for specialists and non-specialists. Many documents and interviews are presented chronologically and each period is introduced by a short but synthetic text.

*Tiananmen Aftermath: Human Rights in the People's Republic of China, 1990* is of a different kind. It is the 1990 issue of an annual series on the situation of human rights in China. Logically in this issue, the events of Tiananmen Square play a very important role. The main argument of the authors – that the level of repression of the democratic movement is bound by an obligation not to hurt occidental consciences too much because of the open-door policy – has been largely confirmed by Beijing's politics in this matter. Besides general considerations of "Politics and human rights" and "Freedom of speech and human rights," the book deals fruitfully with more specific topics such as "Criminal

justice and executions” and “Forced abortions, minorities, women, and religious persecution.” The most important criticism of this book concerns the sources. They have mainly an occidental origin: Chinese sources (from the mainland or Hong Kong) are hardly used and there is no trace of first-hand studies by the authors. In conclusion, this is a good but limited synthesis of the evolution of human rights in China.

In *Tiananmen Square Spring 1989. A Chronology of the Chinese Democracy Movement*, Theodore Han and John Li “offer a comprehensive study of the Tiananmen event by relating the events chronologically and in entry form.” There is no real analysis in this volume, but a crude presentation of the facts. The information comes from a wide range of sources: newspapers, television broadcasts, eyewitness accounts, from mainland China and abroad. Sources from Hong Kong-based newspapers are largely and usefully quoted. An essential instrument for researchers, except for the fact that the authors do not provide an index.

Of these four books, the most complete and the most profound study of the Tiananmen movement is without contest *China's Search for Democracy. The Student and the Mass Movement of 1989*. In contrast to numerous analyses, the editors note that “China's ‘Beijing Spring’ of 1989 was complex, convoluted and often contradictory” and deserves a wider perspective than the struggle of the “good” population against the “bad” regime. In particular, the different contributions show the great variety of behaviour and objectives between participants in terms of generation (between the lost generation and the children of the open-door policy) and social status (between workers and self-made men for example). The most interesting aspect of the book is that faced with the contradictions of the movement, the point of view of the contributors is mainly dialectical. Sources and data are integrated into the analysis: “we have chosen to present the picture of the movement by combining our own analyses of the events with the diverse and contradictory voices of the democracy movement.” The documents are considered as historical documents and not as accurate records of events. They are interpreted in the light of a broader approach to the evolution of Chinese society.

The different contributors, while agreeing with this general methodology, keep their own way of analysis and their own opinions about the movement and the reasons for its dramatic end. The first part is about the “Ferment before the ‘turmoil’,” where Kathleen Hartford presents a good synthesis of the state of Chinese society on the eve of the 1989 events. The five other parts are based mainly on the chronology of the movement and provide interesting analyses of its evolution. A complete index and bibliography contribute to the book's definitiveness.

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*After the Event: Human Rights and Their Future in China*. Edited by SUSAN WHITFIELD. [London: Wellsweep Press, 1993. 128 pp. £7.95. ISBN 0 948454 18 0.]

*Democracy Wall Prisoners: Xu Wenli, Wei Jingsheng, and Other Jailed Pioneers of the Chinese Pro-Democracy Movement*. [New York: Asia Watch, Vol. 5, No. 6, March 1993.]

*Recent Political Trials in China*. [New York: Asia Watch, Vol. 4, No. 10, March 1992.]