QUELLING THE PEOPLE

The Military Suppression of the Beijing Democracy Movement

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This incident was the last sign of interunit conflict. By late Wednesday, the conflict came to an end off the battlefield. The Party reestablished its unity and reasserted its control over the Army. When Premier Li Peng and Vice-President Wang Zhen appeared on television Thursday to congratulate martial law commanders in the Great Hall of the People, the ambiguous "civil war" was over.

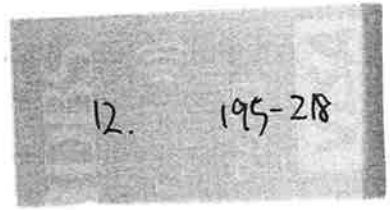
Although PLA units continued to enter the city, Thursday marked the beginning of a return to order. Wrecked vehicles were towed away. Traffic cops reappeared at some of the intersections where soldiers weren't posted, though the gas shortage had reduced traffic to a trickle. Streets were swept. The PLA was a conspicuous part of the cleanup. "Soldiers with straw brooms were out sweeping the streets, though two soldiers carrying weapons were posted with every group, one in front and one behind. There were also trucks going around with loudspeakers blaring out messages to people."

Only on Friday, June 9, did this week of anxious waiting finally come to an end. Deng Xiaoping appeared at dinnertime on television, congratulating his military officers for their courageous and disciplined work. A foreign observer registered the change that evening. "When I went back out into the streets around 7:30, I sensed a sigh of relief. The fear of civil war was already abating now that they knew Deng was alive. I talked to a couple who said they felt better now that 'the emperor had reappeared.' The man said he could go to his factory and work harder. When I asked why, he said, 'Now I have to produce more so that there will be more for me.' Economic concerns reappeared very quickly."

With military security reestablished, the long process of arrest and repression could now begin. This process would go on until the last trials of leading activists and participants two years later. It started on Wednesday, when the evening news called on the people to turn in protesters. Viewers were told to dial 512–4848 or 512–5666, and were assured complete confidentiality for whatever information they might supply. An accused would have no chance to challenge his accuser. These hot lines remained open for several days, although Chinese abroad did their best to jam the lines with an uninterrupted flow of incoming international calls. The arrests started that weekend, as police began to round up the organizers of the Workers' Autonomous Union. The repression was in place. Everyone was going back to work. One could do nothing else.

A foreigner received a telephone call Monday from an acquaintance who worked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They had arranged to meet in a park, but she called to cancel.

"The weather has changed," she said. "It's raining out, you know." The sun was shining.



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Closing the Century

The state has been a conspicuous piece in the puzzle of how China has responded to the challenges of the twentieth century. The frail imperial state structure collapsed in 1911 when the Qing empire fell, and the republicans who pushed it aside could not build an effective replacement. Out of the shifting morass of warlordism arose two Leninist state-organizations, the Nationalist Party under Chiang Kaishek and the Communist Party under Mao Zedong. Both constructed political machines designed to funnel public opinion into a unitary consensus supporting their policies. But military force was decisive in both cases to achieve and sustain national supremacy. The state on its own was powerless.

After winning power in 1949, the Communist Party did not sponsor the creation of a new state, but became it. On the people's behalf—and for their own good—the Party monopolized all political power and exercised totalistic control. It "served the people," but without consulting them. The Party's monopoly has prevented the Chinese state from existing as a forum for representing and negotiating competing ideas and interests. Demands arising outside the Party have no legitimate sphere in which to find expression. Organizations autonomous from the Party have no legal basis on which to stand. In case of conflict, final arbitration is handled by the Army.

The Democracy Movement arose in the gap between the unitary idea of a Party-dominated state and the multiple reality of social existence. The gap itself threatened the Party's grip on power, yet the Party could have

managed the Movement in ways other than it did. The Beijing Massacre was not the only possible outcome of the growing tension between state and society, nor did it have to happen. It occurred for the specific reason that the Party as a state had available to it military means and chose to direct those means against the civilian population of Beijing.

The basic fact of the Massacre—the state's use of lethal force against civilians—is the point from which all interpretation of the event must flow. From it too flows this chapter, in which I work outward from the decision to use lethal force toward the three questions that have came to dominate my thinking about the military suppression of the Democracy Movement. The first question regards the Chinese government: What were its intentions in mobilizing the Army against civilians? Did it intend that the suppression be violent? The second concerns the Army itself: Why did the troops act as they did, and what does this say about how the PLA might act the next time around? The third question is abstract; it asks about the larger context in which the suppression occurred. To put it in question form: How does the military suppression of the Democracy Movement help us understand China's predicament toward the close of the twentieth century?

When Deng Xiaoping appeared on television on June 9 to praise his martial law commanders, he insisted that the suppression had altered nothing fundamental in the Chinese government's course. The policies of reform would continue. Despite the international condemnation, he vowed that China's leadership would "never change China back into a closed country." Yet by mocking international concern, as he did, Deng seemed to close the very doors of the late twentieth century he himself had opened. It was the last decisive act of his political career. Short of a major upheaval in the coming decade—possibly the death of Deng himself—it may also prove to have been China's last significant political decision for the rest of the century.

Deng was not disconcerted by the destruction or the response around the world. "The storm was bound to happen sooner or later," he declared. "It was just a matter of time and scale." His words project an image of supreme confidence, of a leader who enjoys full control of his government and his military. They also suggest that Deng regarded both the Democracy Movement and its suppression as inevitable. It is a convention of Chinese Communist rhetoric to assert that whatever happens had to happen. Deng may have been doing nothing more than wrapping himself in the mantle of Communist wisdom. Even so, the remark implies that the Massacre was a desired outcome. Deng would have us believe that the operation went as planned; he offered no sign of contrition or regret.

Certainly, the scale of the operation, involving at the very least 150,000 soldiers, along with substantial armored support, testifies to considerable planning. The first order bringing outside troops into the Beijing Military

District was issued before April 25. Military leaves were cancelled by the beginning of May. At least two-thirds of the final force was in position for the first assault on May 19. From the first, Deng considered the Army an appropriate means for stopping the students' protests. He sided with it to the last.

The delay in bringing military means to bear on the Movement does suggest a willingness to try other means first, though always with the understanding that if a political solution failed, a military solution would follow. Some of the delay, though, stemmed from the character of the force Deng wanted assembled. He was not content to use the group armies stationed locally within the Beijing Military District, even the Region. In the end, units from eighteen provinces and two municipalities came to Beijing to be part of the martial law forces. Deng wanted wide participation in the suppression, perhaps because he knew it would be an unpopular action, both among the people and within the Army. Arranging that participation required time to bring the armies into position.

However much some commanders resisted having the PLA used to discipline a civilian population, the Army was not a major player in the decisions about when or how to bring the Democracy Movement to a close. The 38th Group Army command dragged its feet prior to the first offensive. But that was only one unit, not the entire PLA. And it did in the end take part in the offensive, under different command. The idea that the PLA resisted Party commands presumes a separation between Army and Party that goes against the principles by which power is organized in China. The Party rules everything, and the military command has been structured in such a way as to foreclose any other possibility. In part this stems from the Party's history of having been founded at a time of warlordism. Such a Party had to learn to survive long years of persecution, which meant having to acquire military power. With the widely discussed exception of General Xu Jingxian, who it is believed was willing to face court-martial for his refusal to lead the 38th, PLA commanders understood that they had to come on side. Their job was not to adjudicate competing political claims between the Party and its opposition. It was to obey the Party's orders.

The failure of the first offensive meant further delay while more troops gathered outside the city and soldiers were infiltrated into the downtown core. This delay fueled wrong expectations: that the Army was powerless against the citizenry, that the soldiers sympathized with the students, that the Party leadership did not have the political will to use violence against civilians. These expectations meant that few could believe on the evening of June 3 that the troops would actually open fire. As late as the early hours of Sunday morning, recalls a Beishida graduate, he and his friends "figured the worst that could come of this would be a wave of arrests, aimed particularly at the student leaders." They could not imagine slaughter. Another Beishida resident presumed the same thing that night. "We knew

that something was going to happen. We thought they would move in, use tear gas, rough them up a little—or a lot—and throw them in jail. We never expected that they would go in there shooting."

Although delay may have jeopardized caution, it also gave the Democracy Movement time to keep growing. The presence of large numbers of protesters, standing now in the shadow of the Goddess of Democracy, could only have increased the irritation of the Army's political masters. As one foreign eyewitness observed to me four months later, "The longer the wait went on, the more humiliating it became for the government to have the Square taken over, not just with demonstrators but with riff-raff and garbage. Tiananmen became a people's square, and every day that went on, the need to clear it must have grown greater and greater. And so, desperate tactics were resorted to." This however is pure supposition on his part. It presumes that the suppression was contingent on how the Movement developed. As I argued in Chapter 4, this way of thinking is problematic. In retrospect, all the signs indicate that the second invasion of the city would go ahead regardless of what happened in the Square. Still, the Goddess of Democracy and the final seventy-two-hour hunger strike did not open any ground for compromise.

By frustrating the leadership and feeding the confidence of the citizenry, the delay may have contributed to the violence on the night of June 3. The government may not have anticipated the scale to which it grew, however. Even Deng Xiaoping conceded that the scale of "the storm" could not be predicted. If there is any sign that the outcome was out of proportion to government expectations, it is the uneasiness over the scale of casualties. Official propaganda has consistently set casualty figures low. The official death toll of three hundred is flatly contradicted by hospital estimates given in Chapter 6. No government likes to fully tally its victims, but the regime's unwillingness to substantiate its casualty figure suggests to me not just that the death toll was high but that it was higher than even this regime considered appropriate. The official numbers may indicate what the government considered acceptable and what the Army failed to deliver.

There are other indications that the government did not fully anticipate the destruction on the night of June 3. One foreign reporter thought to judge the degree of premeditation by seeing how the television news at 8:00 A.M. Sunday morning handled the incident. "The announcement was ready for broadcast, yet it was put together without pictures. The announcers were wearing all black [a gesture that would be forbidden later that day]. They looked like they were going to cry. We saw their faces only briefly, then it became voice-over. I can't understand why they didn't have any visual footage. If they had planned the Massacre, they would have had the whole thing ready and used military announcers. The first news is important, and they screwed it up."

The lack of preparedness in hospitals points to a similar failure to

anticipate the scale of violence that night. As noted in Chapter 6, the rumors that hospitals had advance warning of the slaughter are contradicted by the obvious inability of the hospitals to accommodate the casualties brought to them. If they did have warning, what they were warned of was not equal to what they had to cope with.

The government could not hope to control everything that happened in the streets. Even government agitators would have found it difficult to direct the crowds—and foreign military observers did not detect their intervention during the heat of battle. It is impossible in any case to know how crowds will react in crisis situations. Nonetheless, by dispatching large numbers of armed soldiers among civilians, the Chinese government set up certain probabilities about what might happen. Later, official spokesmen would cling to the view that the operation was designed to restore order to a city gone out of control. This is the theme of televised remarks made by Jiang Zemin, the new Party secretary general, on May 19, 1990, a year after the imposition of martial law. "I don't have any regret about the way in which we dealt with the events which took place last year in Beijing," he said. "Had we failed in the end to take resolute measures to deal with those events, then the entire capital of the People's Republic of China would have been thrown into great chaos." Those measures, he said, China's leaders "were forced to take." He further insisted that they were within the normal range of response that could be expected from "any government in the world." In his view, the military operation on the night of June 3 was a matter of reimposing law and order, not of stifling public debate with violence.

Given the plan of attack that night, it is impossible to maintain that killing was not part of the plan, or that the troops had no other choice than to shed blood. The ferocity of the assault signals that, once the order to fire guns was given, this operation was designed—or, at the very least, expected—to cause violence and produce civilian casualties. No government sends tens of thousands of combat troops into a volatile urban setting without expecting violence to erupt. Pointing AK-47s at unarmed civilians is a formula for disaster.

In regard to the government's intention, a pivotal point in the chain of events Saturday night was the order to open fire. The first assault on May 19 was conducted without shots being fired. During this first operation, some units carried assault rifles, but they were not loaded. The Army distributed ammunition to some units during the night of May 21, presumably in consultation with Party leaders, but permission to use it did not come down. Violent assault against civilians was not yet part of the plan. It may have been reserved as a contingency, but the operation was aborted short of reaching that stage. The government's unwillingness to authorize violence during the first assault strengthened the students' conviction that there was safety in numbers, that, as a foreign eyewitness put it, "the more people there were in the Square, the less likely they'd get

suppressed. They assumed that the Army wasn't going to go in and mow down tens of thousands of people."

By 11:00 P.M. on the night of June 3, soldiers were shooting civilians at Muxidi. They would continue to do so there and elsewhere in Beijing for several days. As long as the soldiers had loaded weapons, they carried with them the option of firing on civilians. The Martial Law Command would not also have included teams of marksmen among the troops had it not anticipated a use for them. On Saturday night, the question was at what point, not whether, live ammunition would be authorized for use.

The Chinese government has engaged in extensive propaganda work to demonstrate the necessity for the decision to unleash lethal force. Using videotapes from the British-made traffic monitors installed at major intersections, as well as the footage shot by PLA videographers, the government has produced television documentaries that purport to show how brutally protesters were attacking the soldiers. By reversing sequence and showing riotous behavior before the scenes of troops firing, these documentaries convey the impression that the demonstrators turned to violence first, and that the troops adopted lethal measures only after the relentless attacks of vicious hooligans. In fact, most of the "rioting" footage was shot *after*—and in response to—violent acts committed by the Army. We see protesters bombarding troops with rocks without being told that the troops had already opened fire. We see crowds attacking stalled APCs without being shown APCs killing and injuring both civilians and soldiers. Sound has been manipulated as well as sight. We see bystanders hysterical with anger but do not hear the sound of automatic weapons fire that has been edited out of the soundtrack.

The naive viewer is led to the conclusion that the government had no choice but to quell the turmoil in the streets. As the voice-over on one video phrased it: "China would surely have been thrown into serious turmoil, and the people's republic would likely have been subverted. Compelled by the circumstances, the government had no alternative but to declare martial law in parts of Beijing."

Within Chinese public opinion, there has grown some sympathy for the government's assertion that the protesters started the violence by rioting and burning vehicles, and only then did the soldiers respond with lethal force. A Chinese student I interviewed a year after the Massacre told me that people in Beijing were discussing this matter. "Did the soldiers open fire first, or did the students set fire to their vehicles first? There's a lot of debate among the people about this. Some, like my parents, say that the students set vehicles on fire, and only thereafter did the troops open fire." (A Tibetan critic has argued, persuasively in my opinion, that the Chinese people are vulnerable to government appeals for the need to use violence. "When the Chinese government repressed its minorities, the whole nation cheered, offering enthusiastic and firm support," Jigme Ngapo has pointed out in a commentary on the Massacre. "Tolerance of violence that goes as far as to condone it has actually encouraged this regime to increase its use of violence.")

Participants in the night's events knew that the citizens did not start the violence. Opening fire was not simply a contingency option that was brought into play once things got out of hand. As the Chinese student I just quoted went on to note, "The Army Command was in communication with its troops and their attack was well organized. So my feeling is that the Army opened fire first. Why would we students start it? Before, our relations with the soldiers were good, very friendly. Why would we turn around and burn their vehicles?"

There was simply too much killing, and it went on for too many days, for slaughter not to have been built into the plans for the June 3 assault. Its soldiers having been turned back once, the Party could permit no second defeat.

But it was not just pride and vengeance that drove the Party to conduct the slaughter. Soldiers had to open fire in order to destroy the citizens' sole protection: nonviolence. The government could draw on no political resources to achieve this. Nonviolence created a charmed circle that protected the Movement against the persuasive and coercive mechanisms the Communist Party is usually able to employ. By resorting to violence, the soldiers stood a good chance of inciting violent responses from the people. Only then would the government have a plausible pretext for striking down those who disobeyed its orders. A foreign diplomat in Beijing agrees. "As long as the demonstrations were absolutely peaceful, there was little the government could do. They had to provoke violence and riot in order to justify their actions."

Violence was accepted by the Chinese government because the Movement had to be suppressed—and no other means were available to a party that had chosen to close off all possibility of negotiating political claims. To permit the Movement to continue would, in the words of President Yang Shangkun on May 24, have led to the transformation of socialism into liberalism. "This would mean the destruction, over-night, of the People's Republic and of the achievements that are the result of decades of war and the blood that was shed by tens of thousands of revolutionary martyrs. It would mean negation of the Communist Party of China." The founding generation of Chinese Communism could not bear such a fate. "To yield," admitted Yang, "would mean our end." He was probably right. As Deng Xiaoping said, the only two things in question were time and scale.

The conduct of the Army on the night of June 3 reinforces the view that the government intended to use violence to crush the Democracy Movement. There is no reason to level assault weapons against unarmed civil-

ians unless you intend to kill them. Even if you accept that troops are needed to disperse political opposition that will not succumb to persuasion, live ammunition will not do the job. It will only kill whoever is in range. As one foreign military analyst in Beijing put it to me in no uncertain terms, "That is the part that is revolting."

The martial law troops used a wide range of weapons against the populace. The AK-47 automatic assault rifle was most common. Soldiers also had metal bars, nail-studded clubs, garottes and whips, including a type of steel-core whip with an outer rubber covering that leaves no visible wounds. In addition to antipersonnel weapons, the Army used machine guns designed to be fired at vehicles and aircraft. Lethal weapons were made more lethal by being placed in the hands of incompetent and badly officered soldiers. Levels of troop ignorance were high. Soldiers did not show that they had much sense of how the operation was to unfold. Each seemed to know at most only his part, and did not understand how his part fit into the larger plan. As a result, soldiers became passive when the order they had received could not be carried out. They had no backup plans, and were not encouraged to take initiatives if a plan failed. When the driver of a stalled PLA truck hopped out of the cab on East Changan Boulevard early Sunday morning to get his truck going again, he was stoned to death by angry bystanders. None of the soldiers in the other trucks in the long convoy did anything to assist him: rescuing a fellow soldier was not part of the plan.

PLA accounts of soldiers' conduct make much of their suffering at the hands of wild mobs. They seek to establish several points: that the soldiers were under strict orders not to injure any innocent people, that they undertook punitive actions only against rioters, and that they practiced forbearance in the face of savage attacks. Some soldiers that night may have been animated by a subjective commitment to sacrifice themselves before harming the people, but their subjectivity is overwhelmed by the objective situation into which their leaders placed them. Soldiers were brutally attacked by enraged mobs, but that does not put the Army in the right. It was the Army that precipitated violent crowd reactions by sending armed soldiers into situations they could not control. Individual acts of heroism and restraint occurred but cannot redeem the Army as a whole. Soldiers, as is always the case, were pawns suffering for political ends that made a mockery of the Army's professed ideals of upright, professional conduct.

The composition of the martial law force exacerbated the confusion—and possibly the indifference of some soldiers toward others in difficulty. The Martial Law Command chose not to preserve existing units and send in soldiers who shared a common command and might identify with one another. Rather, it mixed subunits from different group armies within troop columns. This composition of forces made the entire PLA, and not one group army, responsible for the suppression. It also reduced the

chance that officers would resist the order to occupy Beijing. It inserted them into a new command structure that overrode preexisting officer-corps solidarities within group armies.

This mixing of units complicated the problem of direction in the field. In crisis situations, group army loyalties pulled against interunit cooperation. There are hints of this tension in the battle reminiscence literature produced after the Massacre. One piece by a colonel in a communications unit belonging to the Beijing Garrison dramatizes the tension by showing him mulling over whether to guarantee the communications needs of his own unit or jeopardize them to help another group army. His staff officer is stunned when he declares, "We must protect the army of our friends, no matter what." A divisional commander in the other group army later praises the colonel for his unselfish contribution to his unit's success. The incident was deemed worth recording because it was exceptional.

To raise yet another coordination problem, the failure of provisioning is puzzling. Every general knows that a war can be won on the battlefield but lost in the supply lines. The PLA was never in danger of losing its war with the citizens of Beijing, but the soldiers in the Square had almost nothing to eat from Sunday to Tuesday. It was not until midnight Tuesday that the Army was able to move into the city its first major supply convoy, forty-nine trucks protected by five tanks, five APCs, and six hundred soldiers. The Martial Law forces ran out of other things besides food. On Tuesday, some units were sending soldiers out to scour local shops for batteries. How could the quartermastering for the martial law forces have been so shoddy?

Incompetence and poor planning may explain some of the chaos and account for some of the casualties on the night of June 3–4, but ill preparation and unintended mishap do not excuse the violence. Despite the gross errors, the operation as a whole went roughly as intended, and the soldiers acted largely as they were directed to act. A student participant has come to the same conclusion. "The soldiers seemed to be under pretty good control throughout the whole operation," he had to admit. "They followed their orders. Reports afterward suggest they were very poorly trained, shooting some of their own people, running down some of their own people. Maybe the operation wasn't well organized. But the soldiers followed orders."

It was the shooting and running down of other soldiers that threatened to turn the suppression of the Democacy Movement into a civil war. As PLA units shifted their attention from the protesters to a rogue army, coordination and discipline became even more difficult to maintain. Widespread rumors of military executions in mid-June hint at the extent to which control was lost. By the end of the year, according to the PLA, 111 officers and 1,400 enlisted men had been disciplined. And in May 1990, the commanders and commissars of six of the seven military regions were relieved of office or transferred to other posts.

In addition to the split that developed within the martial law forces, the PLA also suffers now from a split between those who took part in the suppression and those who did not. An Army officer whose unit had not been part of the martial law forces was at Beidaihe later that summer. Beidaihe, a resort on the ocean 250 kilometers east of Beijing, is the most exclusive summer retreat in China. Party and Army leaders go there for their summer holidays. This officer learned that officers from the 64th Group Army who had taken part in the suppression were also there. He was never allowed to speak to them. They were kept segregated, in total isolation. The PLA is an army in deep division.

Participation in martial law is now regarded inside the Army as a matter of shame. If asked, every PLA officer and soldier will insist that *his* unit was not involved in the Massacre. When a representative of the National Education Commission was lunching with officers at the National Defense University in November 1989, every one of them was adamant that his unit did not have the people's blood on its hands.

At best, lingering tensions within the PLA will undermine the Army's ability to coordinate operations between group armies in the future. The 27th continues to be a pariah. At worst, factions within the Party may build bridges with factions within the Army in the hope of outmaneuvering other factions in political contests in the future. And factions within the Army may now be more willing to be drawn into political contests than they were when unity was still maintained.

In the end, I have to conclude that, although the government intended that the suppression be violent, much of the destruction of life and property between June 3 and June 6 was unintended and resulted from unprofessional conduct on the part of the Army. PLA soldiers functioned poorly under the circumstances both because they lacked training in urban warfare and because their deployment in the field was inadequately coordinated at the command level. The startlingly high level of military casualties—a level that the dissension within and between units only made worse—confirms this impression of incompetence.

However badly the PLA troops performed, the fact remains that the military played the pivital role in determining the outcome of the struggle between the Communist Party and its opposition in the spring of 1989. It is difficult to imagine how the power of Deng Xiaoping and Li Peng could have been shored up without the Army's intervention, though what the outcome might have been had the Army remained in barracks is anyone's guess. The actual outcome—both politically and in terms of the reimposition of civil order—was as a direct result of the military's involvement, however incompetently managed. The regime as it stood after June 4 existed by dint of armed force.

The decision to follow orders and rescue Deng from his critics was a fateful one for the Chinese military. By carrying out Party orders and allowing itself to be mobilized against the street demonstrators in Beijing,

the military sided with the ruling elite. It did so at tremendous cost, in terms of both internal demoralization and popular disillusionment about the PLA's being a "people's" army. Even so, the PLA's intervention on the Party's side was to be expected. This is after all a Party army. The military's thorough subordination to the Party is fortified by indoctrination (through its political commissariat), intense supervision, and a recognition of shared material interests. The real surprise that spring was not what the Army was capable of doing, but what the Party would order it to do.

Still, it is not enough to say that the Army's role in suppressing the Democracy Movement was a function of automatic loyalty to political masters and leave it at that. The relationship between army and state is much more interesting, and more ambiguous. No military, the Chinese included, intervenes as a neutral force in a domestic political crisis. Politics always impinges. Even when orders are being obeyed, sides are being taken. This was certainly true in the spring of 1989, for just as the Democracy Movement forced sharp cleavages within the Party, so too it divided the Army. It thus behooves us to consider how the PLA leadership regarded the demands of the Democracy Movement, and how it might react to similar demands in the future.

The history of Third World praetorian regimes in the twentieth century suggests that the military has tended to intervene in domestic politics in favor of the new elites that have emerged during the process of "modernization" to replace nineteenth-century oligarchies, first to help them overthrow the political power of the old ruling classes, then to protect them against incursions from below. The sharing of interests between the military and the new "modernizing" elites is not surprising. The military is itself a "modern" institution, bureaucratic in structure and favoring the sort of rapid economic development that will enable it either to produce or purchase elsewhere the increasingly expensive hardware of modern warfare. The officer corps of Third World militaries tend to be filled, furthermore, by the sons of the new urban middle classes. These young men increasingly turn to the military in search of advancement at a time when status patterns are changing and economic crises make entry into other professions unattractive. In addition, the development of the technology of modern warfare has strengthened this trend: as weapons become more sophisticated, armies need to recruit college graduates to design, maintain, and operate them. And with greater sophistication comes greater cost, which can be borne only by embarking on ambitious programs for economic growth. To an ever-increasing extent, then, military officers and modernizing elites share common social origins that encourage them to embrace the same modernization goals.

The PLA is an exception to this model only to the extent that the formation of a modern military in China has been a two-stage process. During the revolution, the modernizing elites of the Communist Party relied heavily on peasant mobilization to achieve their political and mili-

tary objectives against the old ruling powers. The original Red Army was officered as often by peasants as by the new middle classes, but it was a modern-style institution involving professional training and routinized structures of command. Committed to overthrowing the ancien régime and comprador elites that the Party identified as the obstacles to the building of a modern nation, the Red Army fought a successful civil war that led to the founding of the People's Republic in 1949. Mao Zedong, a member of the emerging middle class struggling to create the new order (he may have been born to a peasant family but he graduated from teachers' college), blocked the full professionalization of the military that his leading generals desired. He did so to prevent it from slipping from his control. The Army remained self-consciously peasant-proletarian as long as Mao remained in power. As soon as he was gone, however, Deng Xiaoping (with the help of Zhao Ziyang) initiated reforms designed to transform the PLA into a modern military organization that relied for effectiveness more on technical expertise than on human-wave manpower and ideological drumming.

The PLA's Red Army traditions combined with the military modernization of the 1980s have resulted in an army that is caught between stages. The rank and file is still filled, as it always will be, with peasants who see more advantage in going into the Army than in staying at home. (A report in the Chinese press in April 1989 noted that as many as 85 percent of eighteen-year-olds were applying to join the PLA. This 85 percent is largely from rural areas, however, producing poorly educated recruits who do not measure up to the needs of a modern professional force.) But the officer corps is divided. At the senior level are Party stalwarts from semi-peasant backgrounds whose interests replicate those of the senior political leadership. The PLA's junior officers, on the other hand, tend to be from urban backgrounds, and better educated. So too does the technical staff attached to the PLA headquarters. These groups by and large backed the students' demands: as we noted in Chapter 2, the staff of the PLA General Logistics Department even marched in the very sizable parade in support of the hunger strikers on May 17.

Many Democracy Movement activists in May assumed that the professionalization of the PLA officer corps, combined with appeals to noble traditions of serving the people, would inhibit the Army from coming to Li Peng's defense. It was a plausible logic. Indeed, in Moscow two summers later, the world would see this logic yield results when officers of the Soviet Army decided not to back a coup against Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev. The error in the Chinese assumption was to neglect the decisive power of the senior officer corps. The PLA is still run by men who owe their power and allegiance to Deng Xiaoping's faction within the Communist Party. Their allegiance is not abstract; most of them personally served in Deng's Second Field Army during the 1940s. It is in their interest to remain on his side, in spite of Deng's willingness to let the

military's share of the national budget dwindle through the 1980s. They are well aware that, under a different dispensation, their careers may be finished. Thus, although the social composition of PLA officers straddles its peasant-revolution and professional-army stages, the older segment still prevails. But its days are numbered. As China moves further along in the present transition from the old revolutionary elite to the new technocracy, the Army will fall more and more into the hands of officers who identify with the reform process, and who opposed the use of martial law in 1989. As the years pass, the possibility grows that, come the next political crisis, the Army will intervene in favor of the reform faction. The spate of internal investigations, ideological campaigns, and leadership shuffles inside the PLA since June 1989 confirm that the Party's ruling faction is anxious to prevent this eventuality.

However we regard the opposition to martial law within the PLA, the issue dividing junior and senior officers is not democracy per se. It is the process of modernization: more specifically, how that process will affect the stability of the emerging technocratic elite. After all, Third World militaries have rarely shown themselves to be keen on opening the political process too wide. It is unrealistic, therefore, to expect the Army, shamed by its role in June 1989, to seek to regain its honor by fighting on the side of democratic change in the future. Junior officers may feel emotionally bound to the idea of democracy because of their experience in June 1989. But how they act the next time they are called upon to mediate domestic political shifts will depend far more on the particular political conjuncture in which they find themselves. Ideology may not play a determining role. Indeed, it is not impossible to imagine a more professional PLA a decade from now shooting people in the streets yet again—not to stall the transition from the old Communist order this time, but to ensure the successful implementation of market-oriented reforms. The interests of the military and the state may once again converge.

Those who participated in the Democracy Movement came to believe that they were taking history into their hands, that they were on the brink of committing China to profound change. A year after it was over, I spoke with one student about his sense of the Movement's significance. "This was the first time in history that the Chinese people gave their lives to transform the autocratic political system of centuries," he said, with pardonable exaggeration. "Since the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), many have died in civil wars, but these wars were only to change the emperor, not the system. June 4 is the first time people gave their lives to establish a democratic system. 1989 is the year China began to follow the course charted by the French Revolution, to die for freedom rather than for the emperor."

It was the youngest students, especially those in first-year university, but also in high school, who were the most emotional, the most radical, the most sanguine about the changes they thought they could bring about. For

them, poised on a great ridge of hope, the Massacre was an unspeakable chasm into which to fall. A foreign scholar saw this fall in the teenage son of a colleague. "This kid was constantly on the phone with his friends the week after the Massacre. He was agitated, worked up, angry. His parents could not calm him down. The government had no credibility with the high school seniors in Beijing, the ones who would have gone to university the next fall." The older generation was just as disturbed. "Even conservative-minded intellectuals said that there had never been a government like this in the history of modern China," noted a graduate student. "Put together all the earlier incidents this century of governments suppressing students and it would be nothing compared with this."

How do we interpret the totality of these events—the hope infusing the Democracy Movement, the violence of the Beijing Massacre, the anger and utter disillusionment of the Chinese people? All stem from the nature of the challenge the Movement posed to the current dispensation of power in China. The students hoped that citizens' rights might be recognized as greater than the desires and privileges of a Party clique that dominates the state in the name of the people. This hope fortified them against the threat of force. They saw that threat as clear evidence of the Party's moral bankruptcy. It demonstrated that the Party's final commitment was to self-preservation rather than the interests of the people. The students insisted that, whatever contributions the Party had made in the past, these did not mean that the state "belonged" to the Party.

Similarly, under the students' inspiration, the citizens dared to believe that the city did not "belong" to the government; hence the Army had no authority to occupy the people's space in Tiananmen. Against the pure authority of the Party-as-state had arisen a sense of what has been called "civil society," the popular rights and social institutions that arose in eighteenth-century Europe in the realm between the family and the state. The concept of civil society expresses the idea that society—the realm of rational, noncoercive affiliations—has greater authority than the state. When the citizens of Beijing took the risk of resisting the Army to protect the students, they placed their own authority above the orders of the state. To resist was to act out the very ideas of rights and institutions that the Movement represented. Stopping the Army was itself a lesson in democracy. It was civil society in the making.

From his vantage point at the narrow summit of Party power, Deng Xiaoping was probably right to call in the Army. The Chinese Communist Party had to suppress the Movement if it wished to continue its monopoly of state power. Since 1949, the Party and the state have been the same entity. As the true representative of the people, the Party could claim to meld the state and the people into a unitary body. By separating the state from the people, the Democracy Movement called the Party's monopoly of power into question. Student rhetoric challenged this fusion of the people and the state by bringing forward concepts like democracy, human rights,

and the independence of the press. All of these concepts erode the absolute authority of the Party-as-state and replace it, at least in theory, with a different authority, the people-as-state. The Party is seen no longer as the state representing all the people but simply as a political organization representing the particular interests of its members. For the Party to negotiate its rule on such terms meant capitulating its position of absolute authority, abandoning its role as state. It had no choice.

The Communist Party in China faces a conundrum cornering any ruling clique in the Third World that wishes to maintain itself in power. It must rule a nation in which no democratic consensus has ever been established. Nation-building occurred in China, as in many other places, as an elite reaction to international pressure in the twentieth century rather than through the grass-roots struggle to establish popular rights. The ruling clique thus has no basis of legitimation and must engage in constant work to ward off the suggestion that its rule is illegitimate. Through the claim that the Party represents the people, Communist ideology asserts that consensus has been reached, when in fact it has been imposed. The new authoritarianism popular with contemporary right-wing Asian regimes (and with some members of the Chinese Communist Party, including Zhao Ziyang) can be mobilized to achieve the same effect of making compliance appear to be part of the natural social order.

Although it is possible to fault Marxism-Leninism for furnishing an excuse for totalitarianism, ideology is not the real problem. Small oligarchies rule nations all over the Third World, under all manner of ideological persuasions. China is no different. We would better understand China's problems by focusing less on its government's ideology than on its predicament as a poor country in an international environment dominated by the developed capitalist world. In the end, the issue is not Communism. It is imperialism: the economic subordination of the underdeveloped world by the developed capitalist world.

Many analysts of the contemporary world reject the concept of imperialism as useful for describing the situation in which Third World countries find themselves today. I find it impossible to make sense of June 4, 1989, without it. The sheer desperation on both sides can only be accounted for by refocusing attention on the deep historical context of China's relationship with the world order emanating from the post-Renaissance European West. Since the sixteenth century, Europe has exploited the resources, labor, and ecological free-space of the rest of the globe to build up its wealth and power. China came under the influence of imperialism early in the nineteenth century, and its history since then has been the struggle to establish equal terms on which to engage in trade and diplomacy. That struggle has been economic, but it has also involved great political rethinking. Since the end of the nineteenth century, Chinese intellectuals have sought to create institutions that would enable China to respond more effectively to the social and economic problems of imposed backwardness.

Foreign pressure forced China to reorient itself away from a self-contained insularity to a world system whose core lay on the other side of the globe.

This reorientation has not been without resistance. The twentieth century opened in China with Beijing under siege by the Boxers. These poor men of north China turned to violence against the foreigners to protest their religious and economic intrusions. The Boxer Rebellion of 1900 generated no solution to the problem of China's relation to the outside world, except the reactive and ineffective one of driving foreign influences out of the country. (The foreign world was as censorious over the Boxer Rebellion as it was over the Beijing Massacre, seeing each as yet one more instance of China's failure to uphold international standards. The one English-language newspaper being published in China in 1900, the *North China Herald*, demanded of the imperial court that it undertake to ensure the safety of foreigners in China—much as foreign representatives eighty-nine years later were doing in the week after June 4. The imperialistic tone of the accounts Westerners later published of their experiences during the siege of Beijing makes me pause over some of the judgments in this book. Most foreign commentators liked to observe that the Boxers were hopelessly incompetent as fighters. Only Putnam Weale had the good sense to point out that "every siege in history has been like this—with everything incomplete and in disorder." Perhaps the PLA is no more hopeless than any other army; perhaps this is what always happens when men turn to arms.)

The xenophobia that fired the Boxers has continued as a dominant posture in state ideology during much of the People's Republic. A foreign enemy is always reassuring when domestic affairs are not going well. It is useful to a state that needs to distract its people from problems closer to home. Mao Zedong's campaign in the 1950s against American imperialism, as Deng Xiaoping's in the 1980s against spiritual pollution, pictured the West, in different degrees, as bent on destroying China. The intentions behind their uses of xenophobia differed, however. For Mao, it served as a means of resisting China's incorporation into the world capitalist market. Deng, on the other hand, accepts this incorporation. When he condemns Western influences as pernicious "bourgeois liberalization," it is to resist appeals to Western-based concepts and institutions that might challenge the Party's monopoly of the state.

The xenophobic theme resurfaced during the Democracy Movement, when the government attempted to mobilize public opinion against the activists by linking their ideas and actions to foreign sources of inspiration. The Goddess of Democracy was an easy target for this kind of misrepresentation. The statue's allusion to the Statue of Liberty was sufficient to discredit the aspirations of an entire generation. The theme is also played in a PLA account of a conversation between citizens and the troops they had immobilized on the evening of June 3. The citizens tell the soldiers that the government has used the media to dupe the soldiers, and that the

soldiers would have a better understanding of what was going on had they been listening to the Voice of America. "We are Chinese," the soldiers are said to have replied, "and so we should listen to the voice of the Party Center. We think you should listen a little more to the voice of the Party Center, and not be fooled by foreigners." The argument about Chineseness tries to negate the Movement by making a xenophobic appeal. Good Chinese do not listen to foreign news because foreign news always serves foreign interests, and foreign interests are always inimical to China's interests. China's interests are best served by listening to only the Party Center. According to this logic, there can be no other truth.

The reforms of the 1980s sent a contrary message to the Chinese people. Foreign technologies and organizational theories have triumphed over the bootstrap approach of the Maoist years. And on their heels have come everything from impressionism to Coca-Cola. The opening to the outside world built into the reform policies cancels the power of xenophobic appeals.

The Party's other appeal against the demands voiced by the Democracy Movement is substantive rather than xenophobic. It argues that economic development in the Third World can be pursued only when political liberalization is kept to a minimum. This is precisely what Deng and his associates have endeavored to do: to develop a modern economy without adopting the political and legal institutions that developed in the West along with capitalism. The latter are luxuries that may come with time. For the present, it is the state, rather than private interest, that serves as the engine of growth. In this regard, they have acted in the latter half of the twentieth century as most Third World countries, regardless of ideological orientation, have acted. The political costs of developing an economy within a liberal environment are regarded as simply too great. Most Third World nations have had to revert to military force from time to time to keep their political arrangements in place. China is no different.

The Chinese government has argued openly for its right to limit the growth of individual freedoms. It has insisted that the perils of economic backwardness far outweigh the need for importing the individualist values of Western liberalism. Chinese government spokesmen express this idea when responding to international criticisms concerning China's violation of human rights. They pit the principle of respect for human rights against what they consider the greater principle of noninterference in the internal affairs of another country. They stress that the individual rights of citizens cannot take precedence over the collective rights of all to adequate food, health care, and education. As one apologist has put it, the tasks of postcolonial Third World governments are "to guard against the subversive and destructive activities of domestic and foreign enemy sources, to preserve social stability, and to relieve people's poverty and hunger." These are unfinished tasks, and until the collective right to live in stability is achieved, the luxury of individual freedoms cannot be granted. According

to this way of thinking, the rights of the individual may not be furthered at the expense of the rights of all.

The roots of the nonrecognition of rights of the individual in Chinese law extend far back beyond the twentieth century. Imperial China developed complex codes and procedures to deal with legal matters, but almost entirely in relation to the enforcement of state regulations, not to the adjudication of private disputes—which is where civil law in Europe began. In imperial China, if an act was legally significant, then punishment followed. This is why the judicial administration under the emperors was called the Board of Punishments. In the West, on the other hand, if any act is legally significant, right of action follows. The old attitude of justice as punishment persists under Communist law, where legal procedures are largely limited to assessing penalties rather than assessing rights. As long as China has no independent judiciary, individual rights cannot be represented against the rights of the state. To rephrase the point made in the previous paragraph, the rights of all always prevail over the rights of the individual.

One can fairly argue that a nation whose hands are tied by poverty, external threat, and overpopulation must first attend to the right of collective survival before going on to address the right of individual action. Many within the Third World accept that a condition of fulfilling this task may be to abridge freedoms that are enshrined as rights in the wealthy Western democracies. But it requires an impossible leap of logic to invoke this appeal as a defense of the slaughter of civilians in the streets of the capital. Whatever predicament the Chinese government faces in handling its economic difficulties, that cannot justify the decision to send tens of thousands of armed soldiers against the people. There are always other choices. Other resources of persuasion, even of coercion, are available. There had to be other ways of reaching Tiananmen Square other than over the bodies of citizens. Indeed, a creative political solution might have strengthened the regime. Instead, force was used, thereby "robbing the Chinese government of its legality and legitimacy in the eyes of the people" as Wuerkaixi put it later.

Both disheartened Chinese and censorious spectators outside China should remember that neither China's leaders nor the students who sparked the mass movement asked the West to place China at the disadvantage it has faced for close to two centuries. It was not China's desire to be victimized by the capitalist world system. Nor has it been the wish of the Chinese people that the process of adapting to that system take the long and tortuous course it has, despite attempts of every ideological stripe to put things right.

On June 4, the leaders of China demonstrated that they lacked the political imagination to reestablish stability in any way except at a cost of thousands of lives. The dead remain unacknowledged, and the men who engineered their deaths unrepentant. This is so not because nothing has

changed in this cycle of Cathay, not because the rulers living in the leadership compound in Zhongnanhai continue to think like the emperors who owned that pleasure park when Deng Xiaoping and Yang Shangkun were mere babies. Rather, Deng and his associates, like desperate modernizers elsewhere in the Third World, understand that history will judge their economic failures more harshly than their violations of human rights.

If this logic helps to explain what happened on June 4, it does not exonerate it. International standards of human rights—even if these standards were generated through Europe's struggle for political justice—still apply. Nor will any litany of appeals, either to China's present predicament or past traditions, ever explain away the surprise the world felt when China's leaders made this choice.

Two years to the day after the Massacre, I sat with a former Democracy Movement activist in front of the finely sculpted replica of the Goddess of Democracy unveiled outside the Student Centre at the University of British Columbia. Many people stopped that sunny morning, some curious to read the plaque at the base of the statue, others caught short by memories that are slipping into the dim reservoir of the past. One female student went to her knees and prayed for a moment in silence. As I talked with the exile about his experiences in the spring of 1989, I asked him what he thought of Deng Xiaoping now. "A criminal in the scales of history," he quipped in a mock voice of stern justice. Then he laughed. "Don't you see? It's not Deng who is at fault. That much power would corrupt anyone. Deng just happened to be the man in that position at that time." In the absence of genuine constitutional restraints, China's leaders are fated to be corrupted by the great economic and political power that lies in their hands. Deng has been no worse than the next autocrat.

Deng Xiaoping has banked on time to let the memory of the Massacre fade from his otherwise respected record as China's modernizing autocrat. Many are willing to conspire in the myth of his leadership and forgive him so long as he washes the blood off his hands. One of the rumors going around some months after the Massacre was that Deng's daughter advised him to "reverse the verdict on the Tiananmen Incident yourself while you are still alive rather than let others change it for you after you are dead." Surely Deng still remembers how completely he himself swept aside the legacies of Mao Zedong once the chairman was dead; surely he knows what will happen to his own reputation. Deng could make a reversal of verdict plausible by claiming he was duped by his subordinates, that conservative schemers manipulated his fear of being deposed to permit a decisive crackdown that would eliminate the power of the reform faction. Even Fang Lizhi offered Deng this out when he insisted to me two years later that "members of the Beijing Party Committee used the Movement to scare Deng into acting as they wanted him to. Only after the suppression did he realize that the students weren't that much of a threat. Perhaps he regrets the killing now."

The excuse that Deng was manipulated might be accepted for a man who looked as feeble as he did on television five days after the Massacre. But to admit to ignorance and manipulation may involve too great a sacrifice of Deng's precious and dwindling moral capital. In any other political system, and perhaps even in the Chinese, the admission would entail resignation. Emperors do not abdicate: they are the state incarnate. The man is not free to follow any other course.

Whether Deng Xiaoping decides to salvage his place in history is, of course, of little consequence to history itself. A reversal of verdict, even if undertaken for the wrong reason, might shift China slightly toward the political modernization that it badly needs. But in the end, even that shift may do little to steady China's crossing into the twenty-first century, for it is the world around China that sets the terms. We in that outside world may deplore the violence unleashed in the streets of Beijing. At the same time, however, we share the burden of having shaped a world in which the leaders of China could answer the challenge of youthful hope only with violence and despair.

Afterword

Since the publication of this book in 1992, many readers have taken the trouble to offer thoughtful responses to its ideas and arguments. As yet, no one has challenged the reconstruction of the events as I present it, nor brought forward new information that would require that I seriously reconsider the story of violence that I tell. Only one reviewer identified a clear error of fact in the Introduction (regarding the Chinese military presence in Tibet), and that has been corrected. Otherwise the account as I wrote it in the years immediately following the massacre remains substantially unchanged in this edition. This is not to say that the book does not have its shortcomings—nor that readers have failed to point them out. Although reviewers were generally positive about the book, they did voice criticisms, and these deserve some reflection. In responding to them here, my purpose is not to defend myself so much as to use them as a way of briefly reviewing what June 4 meant, and continues to mean.

The criticisms have been of three sorts, which I shall distinguish as voice, theory, and conjecture. The first, voice, was expressed most directly by a friend and fellow China historian. He worried that in what he felt was the voice of the human rights advocate, not that of the dispassionate historian, I had crossed the boundary that historians must maintain between scholarship and politics. When that boundary is crossed, he felt, the reader cannot trust that the author has given him an objective account of events. To me as a historian, this is a troubling criticism, not because I now doubt the voice in which I wrote the book (I don't), but because the charge asserts