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The Chinese Intellectuals and the Revolt

BY PERRY LINK JUNE 29, 1989

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The Beijing revolt of 1989 has caught the world's attention, but the malaise that led to the emergency is broader and deeper than any of its conspicuous slogans can suggest. For foreigners like myself who live in Beijing, it was already clear nine months ago, as one listened to the complaints of intellectuals, students, and ordinary citizens outside official life, that yet another modern Chinese crisis was looming. People were angry, depressed, and confused. The intellectuals, still largely accepting the Confucian duty to "worry first" about their country and not about themselves were, in private, down-right morose—and frankly despairing that much could be done.

The intellectuals had tried before to become involved. Many had thrown themselves idealistically into the revolution in the early 1950s only to have their good intentions cruelly betrayed—"our back-bones severed, our brains discarded"—in Anti-Rightist campaigns of the late 1950s. Horribly humiliated during the Cultural Revolution of the late 1960s and early 1970s (imagine being told you had to pay for the bullet that had "executed" your teen-ager), they somehow mustered their patriotic optimism again in the late 1970s. Deng Xiaoping's "reforms," they hoped, might truly, and finally, put China on the right track.

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But by the late 1980s this second round of optimism had also collapsed. The economic reforms, which did much good in the short term, particularly in increasing food production, had stalled in the face of the leadership's unwillingness to accept the loss of political control that was implicit in pressing those reforms further. Inflation was running near 30 percent. Corruption was running wild, and it seemed only the more serious as one looked higher up the power structure. Official Marxist ideals appeared as empty shells, mere tokens manipulated in public word games in order to increase a speaker's private advantage. But what other faith was there? Calls for more democracy had been crushed in 1979 (as "unstabilizing"), in 1983 (as "spiritual pollution"), and again in 1987 (as "bourgeois liberalism"). The top leadership seemed, with rare exception, frozen in the cast of mind of the 1950s or earlier, or—even worse—themselves inwardly cynical, jealous of their own narrow interests. Meanwhile China faced problems whose severity would daunt even a vigorous, efficient government: overpopulation, food and energy shortages, mounting foreign debt, resurgent illiteracy, environmental pollution.

Could one look to the people, hope for change "from below"? The Chinese common people, newly given the right to make money, seemed preoccupied by that goal. Crass commercialism was rampant. Swindling, armed robbery, prostitution—even the hijacking of freight trains—were on the rise. Public ethics were in decline; people on the streets were colder and ruder to one another than ever before. Improve this through education? But China's per capita investment in education, as a percentage of GNP, was among the lowest in the world, even the third world. The teaching profession, with its paltry and fixed salaries, was viewed as a dead-end career. True, the city of Beijing has a large, bright, and visible student population; but nationwide, only 1 percent of Chinese high school graduates go to college, as compared with 9 percent in India and 20 percent in South Korea. Some intellectuals even suspected that the government's neglect of education was a deliberate policy aimed at keeping dictatorship stable.

The sense of crisis has been greatly intensified by the rising expectations born of comparison with other Asian societies—especially Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore, with their Chinese populations. Among younger Chinese, the example of Taiwan, with its increasing democracy and long record of prosperity, has been particularly attractive. "Look," one of China's most brilliant young academics observed to me last fall, "the Chinese people are not stupid. They are not lazy. Something is *wrong*."

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There has been broad consensus on this point, but not on what to do about it. China's problems appear to be such a huge mass of intertwined strands that everyone seems to have his or her own notion of where to start. Should we work for dismantling the "work unit" system, so that a person needn't remain beholden to, and intimidated by, a single oppressive boss? Or a free press, so that we can share ideas and check

government abuses? Or, as a first step toward political competition, should we work for a formal recognition that two factions, "liberal" (more pro-Western) and "conservative" (more Leninist-Stalinist), in fact exist in the Chinese leadership? Or is it hopeless to expect any of this? Should we wish only for a gradual, solid improvement in education, so that the next generation might do better?

A most immediate problem has been the "personal risk trap." Although disaffection among intellectuals has recently been almost universal, everyone knows that whoever steps forward to voice it publicly risks retaliation by his or by her Party-controlled "work unit" leadership—which decides not only one's salary and work assignment, but one's housing, ration coupons, medical care, children's education, permission to travel, and more. For decades the Communist party has used, at all levels, the technique of blaming individuals, or "a handful of troublemakers," when a much larger body of opinion is actually involved. This not only threatens activists but signals to everyone that the route to safety is through docility. Internationally known victims of the device, such as the writers Bai Hua, Liu Binyan, and Wang Ruowang in the 1980s, are partly protected by their fame; they have suffered less than many anonymous others. The "stability" induced by this control technique is, of course, an illusion, as the events of mid-May have dramatically shown. When occasionally the floodgate fully opens, the tactic becomes temporarily useless.

At the end of 1988, there was no sign of the events of May. Most of the middle-aged and older intellectuals seemed beaten—able to hope, at best, only for painfully gradual change. A sociologist barely forty told me, "My life is over; I hope my daughter's will be better." A poet about the same age said: "The hardest job in China today is nursery school teacher. Do you teach the little ones to tell the truth, and thus doom them? But—can you really instruct them in how to *lie*?" A scientist in her fifties told me she was retaining her Communist party membership only to await the point at which her resignation could have maximum impact. Some hoped, however fleetingly, for "new authoritarianism"—the desperate wish that a hero might come along and use dictatorship to end dictatorship: clean things up, decree democracy, and then resign. (The idea lost favor when it became clear that it had been planted by the top leadership itself.) Yet however depressed they are, intellectuals over thirty were still thinking of what was "best for China."

The generation under thirty was more radically alienated, and sometimes seemed entirely cut loose from patriotic concerns. Students at Beijing University, with caustic irony, caricatured themselves as either the "Ma-faction" (meaning "Marxist," but with a pun on "Mahjong," which they said they played in lieu of attending classes) or the "Tuo-faction" (meaning "Trotskyist," but with a pun on "TOEFL"—the "Test of English as a Foreign Language," for which they were cramming in order to get abroad, to jump the "sinking ship" of China). The younger generation's more extreme expressions were a saucy combination of sincerity and rhetorical overkill: that China would be better off if England had colonized it after the Opium War, or (*unthinkable* to the older generation) if Japan had won World War II; or that China cannot progress "until it loses half its population—whether by atom bomb, famine, or AIDS doesn't matter."

One could sense, even at the nadir of morale last fall, that these were not expressions of utter nihilism or benumbed defeat. The bitterness of the irony bespoke ideals that, while submerged, remained stout. Idealism gushed to the surface occasionally, as when heroes of the students, like dissident astrophysicist Fang Lizhi, appeared on campuses for talks. Both Fang and Liu Binyan, the widely admired muckraking journalist, were able to foresee that the seventieth anniversary of the famous "May Fourth Incident" of 1919 (when students rallied in Beijing in support of nationalism, science, and democracy), might bring forth another wave of student patriotism. But to my knowledge no observer, Chinese or foreign, anticipated the force and volume of what we have witnessed in April and May, after Beijing University student posters said, "we offer our blood, lay down our young lives," in order to "serve our nation" and "liberate it from obscene tyranny."

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More than a year ago, two young Chinese women living in America, Hong Huang and Liu Baifang, together with the writer Orville Schell, who is married to Liu, launched a plan for a "China Symposium '89" to be held in Bolinas, California, April 26–29, 1989. Their idea was to gather a group of about twenty-five of China's intellectual leaders, bring them to an idyllic, isolated spot for a few days, keep the press at bay, avoid formal or prepared statements, and simply let them exchange ideas on the question, in a nutshell, "whither China?" Those attending included such leading figures as Liu Binyan, the editors Wang Ruoshui and Liang Congjie, the literary scholar Liu Zaifu, the playwright Wu Zuguang, the poets Bei Dao and Shao Yanxiang, and the filmmaker Chen Kaige. Ch'en Yingchen and Bo Yang, two writers from Taiwan (and both veterans of prison), also attended, as did a modest contingent of Western and overseas Chinese scholars and writers. Attendance by mainland participants carried risks: a few declined to come, and six who wanted to, notably Fang Lizhi and his wife, the physics professor Li Shuxian, were denied travel permission. But the conference was still the most comprehensive meeting of reform-minded and dissident Chinese intellectual leaders to take place since the revolution.

In scheduling the meeting, the planners suspected that the days just before the seventieth anniversary of the "May Fourth Incident" might be lively times in China, but they had not foreseen how truly exciting the coincidence would be. Throughout the four days of the conference, it seemed that someone was calling family or friends in China almost hourly, racing back to the group as a whole with the latest electrifying news: the students were in the streets…the police did not stop them…the police *could* not stop them…workers were bringing them bread… Deng Xiaoping was angry…the leadership was split…a blacklist of scapegoats was being prepared…the knife might fall….

The students in Beijing demanded a televised "dialogue" with the top leaders. The former *People's Daily* editor Wang Ruoshui speculated that the leadership would accept the demand, trot out its cleverest debaters, and try to score a propaganda win over the neophyte students. (This prediction was proven basically accurate by events, although the students complained that the several "dialogues" were never on an equal footing.) The Harvard political science student Pei Minxin said yes, the official spokesmen are cleverer debaters, but they have no substance on their side—what can they credibly say? Liang Congjie, who had recently finished editing *The Encyclopedia of China*, and now edits an independent magazine for Chinese intellectuals, said that, in any case, the TV audience would hardly be neutral; practically everyone would root for the students, he correctly predicted, no matter who scored the debating points. The poet Shao Yanxiang said spilling the students'

blood, if it happens, would mark the final self-destruction of the Communist party in China; as a Party member, he said, he felt this point most intensely. The young filmmaker Chen Kaige said spilling student blood, however regrettable, would be a *victory*; it would hasten the demise of any lingering naive faith in the "moderate" faction of CCP leadership.

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The first formal panel at the conference centered on the question of China's "system": What is it? How did it get that way? What can be done about it? Veterans of US student protest twenty years ago will notice parallels, both in the sweeping nature of the questions and in the "crisis" atmosphere impelling them. Wang Ruoshui, perhaps the best-trained Marxist in the group, used a calm, almost inaudible voice to deliver a devastating analysis. In classical Marxism, he said, the individual is supposed to reach full self-realization through the collective; but in the Chinese system, those charged with determining the collective interest have, at all levels, abandoned this pursuit in favor of pure self-interest. They exploit the blood and sweat of the people; they suppress individuality in the false name of the collective. The people, understandably, have become alienated, and have regressed into cynical self-interest themselves. Do we now have "individualism"? No. Individualism implies a certain personal integrity. What we have now is only selfishness.

The young novelist Li Rui angrily spoke of the destitute peasants of Shanxi whose lives he had shared. They had supported the revolution in the 1940s. But "ownership of everything by the people" became "ownership of *nothing* by the people." You Americans are interesting, he said. You have so much freedom, so many human rights, so much material comfort, that you can go around worrying about the human rights of others. Shanxi peasants, he added, have been so cruelly deprived, for so long, that they don't even know how to cry out.

Drained of all its idealism, the senior playwright Wu Zuguang observed, "our system is left only with its iron framework of paternalistic authoritarianism." Wu told how he had tried to speak out on various issues only to have well-meaning friends counsel him that "Comrade [Deng] Xiaoping says…" or "Premier Zhou once said…," and expect him to abandon his assertions, lest "everyone in literature and art oppose you." Some of the audience laughed knowingly when he recited the text of a student poster he had recently seen:

> The lower levels obey the upper levels
> The upper levels obey
> Party Central Party Central obeys Deng Xiaoping
> Deng Xiaoping obeys impulse.

Wu commented on the apparent intractability of this problem of "feudal" authority. "In the May Fourth era, our slogan was 'Science and Democracy'; today our slogan is *still* 'Science and Democracy'! Where has seventy years got us?" Ge Yang, chief editor of the Beijing magazine *New Observer* and a long-time Party member, described the Party as a great, overgrown tree that was now halfdead and rotting. "I once wept to see Mao," she said. "Now I realize I was only upholding feudalism." Li Rui said he felt he was born in the middle of a long, long night that will not end.

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The Chinese leadership normally answers such complaints and outcries with calls for "stability and unity." We should not, said Shao Yanxiang, be intimidated by this slogan. If we review the history of the People's Republic, it is easy to see that severe disturbances of "stability and unity" have always come, not from us, but from the top leadership: just look at the Anti-Rightist Movement, the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, and numerous other examples. We are the ones with the right to call for "stability and unity"—and only democracy can provide it.

The astounding degree to which an authoritarian government's monopoly on power can in fact undermine social stability has been clearly shown by the events of the week of May 21–27, as all of China, a fifth of the world's population, waited to lurch in a direction determined by an intense struggle among three or four men at the very top. At Bolinas, the point emerged during lunch the first day. The joyous news had just arrived that the students' marches of April 27 had been triumphant. "Joyous" news? Not for Liang Congjie, although no more sincere or ardent supporter of democracy can be found. He was worried, even agitated. If the students ruled the streets, who ruled Beijing? Who ruled China? We might see "nationwide chaos." The "hooligan" element in Beijing alone numbers some one million; they could run wild. The Communist party's unified authoritarian control, which for years has had everybody caught in self-protecting falsity, is, for all its hatefulness, *all that we have*, Liang said. In America you don't have to worry that your police department will dissolve if the Democrats win the White House. Later, Chen Kaige captured Liang's point in a metaphor: Mao Thought, for China, was like a giant magnet that ordered the pattern of all the individual iron filings. With the big magnet gone, one solid jolt could scatter the filings everywhere.

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The second main question at the conference was: How did it come about that Chinese intellectuals were so mistreated in the People's Republic? What should their role be now? Most felt the mistreatment had been partly self-inflicted. The literary theorist Liu Zaifu observed that, in the 1950s, "we did not believe in ourselves, but only in the all-wise, all-powerful Mao." Liu Binyan recalled: "When I was criticized and expelled from the Party in 1957, my first reaction was that *of course* my thought must be 'incorrect'; *of course* I must remold myself—how could the Party be wrong?" Where did such assumptions come from? "We were on the rebound from the 1940s," Wang Ruoshui said by way of explanation. A peasant party had come out of the hills to put an end to corruption, invasion, and humiliation; they wore straw sandals and told the truth; they seemed our moral superiors; how could we question them? And to this self-abnegation was added, Liu Binyan said, the traditional Confucian duty of the scholar to serve state above self; disloyalty became unthinkable.

But such acquiescence only set the stage for the tyrant Mao. “Are you afraid professors? I’m not!” Mao once boasted—revealing, as Liang Congjie astutely observed, Mao’s fundamental sense of inferiority before intellectuals. Later intellectuals became “freaks and monsters” and “stinking dregs” whose evil nature was determined by social class but also, paradoxically, inherited. “We should be unembarrassed to reject Maoism flatly,” declared Wu Guoguang, a young reporter for *People’s Daily*. “Maoist culture is basically gangster psychology.” In this bold statement Wu seemed to be purging himself. He had clearly felt guilty about his own newspaper when a report arrived at the conference that students in Beijing were chanting: *The People’s Daily* / Babbles like a clown / Central TV / Turns truth upside down.” Yet the phrase “gangster government” is not Wu’s invention; it is widely used among China’s intellectuals.

And what should an intellectual’s role be now? “We can’t expect others to respect us until we respect ourselves,” Liu Ziafu declared, to the apparent assent of all. “Our job is to tell the truth,” said Bei Dao, “and if we don’t, we indeed *are* inferior to bean curd vendors, who do their jobs quite well.” But there was no consensus on how much an intellectual’s independence should be devoted to social action as opposed to pure scholarship or art. “I see a terrible incongruity,” said Liu Binyan. “On one side, 500,000 people massed in Tiananmen Square; on the other, in our literary magazines, essentially a blank—*avant-garde* experiments, read by only a few, understandable sometimes by none.”

Bei Dao bluntly disagreed. “True art does not ask about its own ‘social effects.’ We will understand this problem more adequately only when we understand why foreign writers, unlike Chinese writers, sometimes commit suicide…. It’s because they’re concerned with life itself, not social engineering.” Others held that the social benefits of art were real, but could not be planned. “The best way to write for the people,” said Cao Changqing, a young sociologist, “is not to try to.” Leo Lee, a professor of Chinese literature at the University of Chicago, observed: “The way to oppose Mao is not to fight him, but to ‘deconstruct’ him. If someone says, ‘Mao was a great man,’ you reply, ‘Was Mao a great man?’ and resume your professional work.”

The other main theme of the conference concerned foreigners and foreign ideas in China. Can Western concepts of democracy and human rights be imported to China? Should they be? What role, if any, should concerned foreigners play? Someone disdainfully noted that when conservatives in the Chinese government oppose the importation of Western democracy, they often say it does not suit China’s “national character,” which supposedly is more accustomed to autocracy. But others acknowledge there is a bit of truth in this claim. Liang Congjie said:

> In politics, Chinese don’t compromise. Even some of us modern intellectuals, in establishing our Academy of Chinese Culture [an independent group, founded in 1984, of leading professors of humanities in Beijing who sponsor research, lectures, and offer correspondence courses], sometimes took the attitude, “I did more work on this, so why should I listen to *you*?” So you see…this mechanism called “democracy,” invented by the Western bourgeoisie, which takes disparate views and concentrates them at a single point, is a pretty marvelous invention.

The behavior of the conference itself occasionally seemed to confirm Liang’s point. Pleas for democracy were not always expressed democratically. (To paraphrase the more extreme examples: “I know that some people don’t defend basic liberties, and I wish those people would shut up.”) But if Chinese democracy faces problems, no one at the conference could abide the current official view that the problems provide a reason to apply the brakes. Just because your march is longer, do you not begin it? Some Western participants, citing fairly gross flaws in the existing democracies, pointed out that perfect democracy is an illusion and should not be the standard that China demands of itself.

At a more emotional level, Chinese conservatives have opposed democratic ideas as a form of foreign intrusion. At China’s Foreign Ministry, Western concern for human rights counts as “interference in China’s internal affairs.” When absorbed by Chinese people, the same ideas have been labeled “spiritual pollution” and the like. To be sure, such labels are primarily devices for ideological control. But their power comes not only from the threats they bear, but from their resonance with deep-seated feelings about the pride and singularity of being Chinese. Some at the conference felt that this pride was itself a barrier to democracy and ought to be reconsidered.

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One evening everyone at the conference watched a videotape of Professor Fang Lizhi explaining his view that “patriotism should not be our top priority.” It should be increasingly clear, said Fang, that human beings and human rights are the same everywhere. In comparing societies, we should use terms like “more advanced” and “less advanced,” “more democratic” and “less democratic”—but not terms like “East” and “West,” or “China” and “foreign,” which only arouse feelings of national pride that block the way to progress. But others, such as Liu Binyan, felt that patriotism was still one of China’s most precious resources. It is all we have, argued Liu, to bind us together: our people are alienated, our ideology is completely discredited, a wild selfishness has taken over. True, the patriotic idealism we had in the 1950s has been ravaged by Maoism; but it is not entirely dead.

On the question of what part concerned foreigners can play, the advice that the Chinese conferees gave to those from the West was diametrically opposed to their government’s warnings against “meddling in China’s internal affairs.” First, they said, you should learn the *facts* about China; you should not superimpose preconceived notions. Idealizations of “socialism,” sometimes dearly felt among American intellectuals, are well and good, but simply have nothing to do with the realities of Chinese daily life. Your assumption of a connection is naive, and your naiveté is exploited by Chinese autocrats.

Michael Oksenberg, a political scientist at the University of Michigan and a key figure in the establishment of US–China diplomatic ties ten years ago, rather courageously raised the question “What are US national interests?” and then went on to suggest that stability of the Chinese government was one of them, and that no foreign policy should be based on “sentiment” (even if such “sentiment” favored democracy and

human rights). For a few minutes the Chinese side of the room sat stunned. Then the questions came, in a crescendo that lasted beyond the end of the session. How can a corrupt government be "stable"? Was opposition to the Nazis based on "sentiment"? Aren't human rights "universal"? How would you feel if America were under repressive dictatorship and other countries sought their "national interests" from the situation?

Seven months ago, well before the first signs of China's current turmoil, a Chinese friend called the mood of China's intellectuals "*fin de siècle* consciousness." "Something is in gestation now," she said. "We just don't know what it is—it could be very good, and it could be horrible." The same sense pervaded the Bolinas conference, only more sharply. By the third week in May, as students in the streets of Beijing utterly defied Premier Li Peng's order of martial law, and held aloft banners bluntly ridiculing him, even as his armies approached, the question "What next?" burned with a ferocity unimaginable just a few weeks earlier. Some intellectuals were in the streets, either supporting the students or entreating them not to risk their safety; others went into hiding, fearful of arrest; many just stayed home, stunned and watching.

Toward the end of May, as I was finishing this article, many of the demonstrators thought they had "lost." When General Secretary Zhao Ziyang and his lieutenants were purged, the students and their supporters, who at the outset had demanded "democracy" as a challenge to the government as a whole, began to identify with the fallen leaders. It became clear that most of the demonstrators had been bound together not by any coherent program for democratic change, but simply by their revulsion at the current situation in China. When their struggle became desperate, they began to fall back on deeply engrained Confucian notions of "upright officials" versus "wicked officials." This response was first apparent in Tiananmen Square when protesting students jockeyed to get Zhao Ziyang's autograph when he made a brief visit; when portraits of the "upright" Zhou Enlai appeared (never mind that Li Peng, the movement's *bête noir*, had been Zhou's adopted son); and when rumors spread that Vice-Premier Wan Li was returning from America to save the situation.

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At the end of May, although it seemed clear that the reformist leadership had lost out, it was still not clear how much of a crackdown, if any, would fall upon students and intellectuals. A few more were going into hiding. The Chinese press and television, whose offices were under military control, were issuing a curious combination of hard-line verbiage that was reminiscent of the Cultural Revolution and ordinary reporting that completely ignored the crisis atmosphere. Fang Lizhi told me, before he left Beijing on May 24, that if a crackdown were to go all the way, "China will be set back ten years." Pained to hear this judgment from a man whose optimism is normally so powerful, I lamely asked what a Westerner could do to help. "When the Polish government cracked down on Solidarity," Fang replied, "I believe the American government took certain measures against the Polish generals." The second part of his statement, which he left unspoken, was: I hope America will not observe a double standard in such matters.

Grim and unpredictable as the immediate future might seem, history is not likely, as the demonstrators fear, to judge the movement a failure. In the 1980s, each repressive move by the top leadership (1981, 1983, and 1987) has, ratchet-like, brought a short-term curtailment of freedom followed soon by an even greater speaking out. Ironically, the representation of liberal thought in the top leadership seems to be declining on the same schedule. In 1987 the liberal Hu Yaobang was purged after a student uprising; in 1989 Zhao Ziyang and other moderates have fallen after an even larger rising. This leaves China in the highly unstable situation of polarization between a populace that wants ever more freedom and a top leadership ever more single-mindedly of the opposing view. There is every reason to expect that demands from below will rise again.

When they do, some of the long-term contributions of the May 1989 demonstrations will be more apparent. At least three features of the basic situation in China cannot be forced back to where they were before.

First, the breadth and depth of popular sympathy for the democracy movement have been publicly established, and shown to be considerably greater than what had been assumed before. Six months ago—because China's people live basically inside all-encompassing work units, have no free press, and must be careful about discussing political change in public—pro-democracy opinion was, we now know, widespread but atomized. What happened on the days of mass demonstration, such as May 17, is that many people who were in natural agreement suddenly discovered one another. Students angrily demanded that the press tell the truth, only to have a large group of reporters join their protest march under the banner "We *want* to tell the truth." A great variety of factories, offices, and schools were represented—extending even to the Central Party Cadre School and the Marxism–Leninism Research Institute.

For the first time in years, strangers on the street were polite to one another; people had rebounded from what had seemed an incurable cynicism. There was great camaraderie in the notion of all-of-us-against-them. (One small banner, the day after martial law was declared, said: "One billion people, one billion vegetable cleavers.") Even if the movement is repressed, memories of that unusually positive mood, in Beijing and many other cities, will certainly linger. True, there have been earlier instances in the history of the People's Republic—notably 1956, 1966, and 1979—when at least part of the population was briefly thrilled to be able to unload their grievances. But in these earlier cases they were speaking out *with the top leadership's blessing*. In 1989 the opportunity was successfully created from below. This new fact of the possibility of popular independence will not be forgotten—the leadership itself will have to bear it in mind from now on.

Second, freedom of the press has been given a boost that will not be entirely reversible. The first march by the students, on April 19, was ignored in the official press except for a basically false account of a minor skirmish with police. With the large marches in May, reporters and editors from both TV and the press began not only to cover the story, but to do it sympathetically. Even after martial law was declared, popular demands for the resignation of Premier Li Peng were reported in the *People's Daily* in barely disguised fashion. This new freedom could, of course, be repressed. But the precedent of self-wrought autonomy for the press, albeit only partial, will only be driven underground, not killed.

Third, the idea of public, nonviolent, organized dissent by intellectuals has taken root. The Beijing revolt of 1989 can be traced to three petitions that intellectuals signed, in February and March, calling for the release of Wei Jingsheng and other political prisoners. Although the petitions failed to free any prisoners, their very considerable significance was to mark the first time in Communist Chinese history that intellectuals have, as a group, publicly opposed the top leader on a sensitive issue. The first two petitions drew a stern warning that things must go no further. Within twenty-four hours, the third petition was organized and signed by forty-three scholars—which was exactly, and not accidentally, one more than had signed the second petition.

The message to the leadership, in direct defiance of its standard tactics of intimidation, was: The more you repress us, the more of us will peacefully oppose you. The student marches obeyed the same logic: The harsher the warning, the larger the next day's march. If it comes to guns, of which the students and intellectuals have none, this pattern of course would have to stop. But the very pacifism of the students' and intellectuals' tactics have helped to deter violence so far.

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