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# UPHEAVAL IN CHINA; In Beijing Protests, Changes By Deng Return to Vex Him

By FOX BUTTERFIELD MAY 21, 1989

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If as is widely presumed Deng Xiaoping made the key decision to call in the army to crack down on the demonstrators in Beijing - protesters who have demanded his retirement - he becomes a paradoxical, possibly even tragic figure.

For it was Mr. Deng, a shrewd pragmatist, who engineered China's bold economic revisions and its opening to the outside world after the disaster of the Cultural Revolution - changes that have cleared the way to the current protests.

But Mr. Deng, a veteran of the Communist's epic Long March of the mid-1930's, is also a staunch Leninist who believes in the primacy of Communist Party control and who has found himself unable to go farther and accept the students' demands for greater democracy.

"Deng is getting a bum rap," said Merle Goldman, a professor of history at Boston University, referring to the students' demands that Mr. Deng retire. "He brought about what is happening today, but now he can't deal with it," Professor Goldman, a specialist on the Communists' treatment of intellectuals, said.

## Contradictory Character

The difficulty and poignancy of Mr. Deng's plight is underscored by reports that he has left Beijing for an undisclosed destination in southern China, as if to

avoid whatever confrontation occurs between the demonstrators and security forces.

Because of the success of the changes Mr. Deng introduced starting in 1979 - including a return to private farming, a lessening of the role of ideology and allowing Chinese students to study abroad - he has often been presumed to be a liberal by people outside China.

But the 84-year-old Mr. Deng is a far more complex and contradictory character who has never made a secret of his insistence on the need for what he refers to as order.

In a talk to a high-level Communist Party meeting on April 25, he warned that the Government would "no longer tolerate" the then burgeoning student movement. 'A Mind as Keen as Mustard'

The protesters were "destroying China's hopes," Mr. Deng said. "I had hoped that we wouldn't have to spill blood. But if we have to do so, then we will."

Mr. Deng's history and his long, close association with the People's Liberation Army also tends to be forgotten outside China.

The son of a landlord in Sichuan Province in the southwest, Mr. Deng, like a number of the original Chinese Communist leaders, joined the party while in France in the early 1920's on a work-study program. He spent a few months studying in Moscow in 1926 before returning to China to join the fledgling Red Army in the remote countryside as a political commissar.

He made the Long March with Mao Zedong in 1935-36 as deputy political commissar of the First Army Corps, and in 1938 impressed a visiting United States Army observer, Evans Carlson, as "short, chunky and physically tough, with a mind as keen as mustard."

In World War II and the ensuing Chinese civil war between the Nationalists and Communists, Mr. Deng took part in many key battles, rising to be one of the Red Army's senior commanders. In 1952, three years after the Communist triumph, he was transferred to work in the Government and party in Beijing, and in 1954 was made Secretary General of the Communist Party.

But the contacts he formed in the army would remain the cement of his political power for years to come, a key ingredient for any Chinese Communist leader.

His experience also shaped his approach to governing. In 1957, after Mao had encouraged a brief outpouring of criticism of the Communists in the Hundred

Flowers Campaign, Mr. Deng, as Secretary General of the party, helped lead a crackdown that exiled hundreds of thousands of professors, writers and scientists to the countryside or labor camps.

In 1967, in the Cultural Revolution, Mr. Deng was publicly humiliated and forced to confess that he was a "counterrevolutionary" by Red Guards inside the Zhongnanhai compound, where China's leaders live and work. Only a few blocks away that day, three million Red Guards from all over China were massed in Tiananmen Square, where the current demonstrations have also been taking place.

Mr. Deng was sent into exile and worked in a tractor factory, giving him a chance to observe first hand how Mao's economic policies had failed. When he was later "rehabilitated" and ascended to power again in the late 1970's, he implemented a sweeping new agenda of economic changes.

But Mr. Deng always remained suspicious of political dissent and had the country's leading dissident of the time, Wei Jingsheng, arrested for daring to call for democracy. His disdain for critics was reflected in a comment he made to a group of Communist officials.

"We put Wei behind bars, didn't we?" Mr. Deng said. "Did that damage China's reputation? We haven't released him, but China's image has not been tarnished by that. Our reputation improves day by day."

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