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## UPHEAVAL IN CHINA: Reporter's Notebook; For Foreigners, Beijing Turns Chilly

By NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF and SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES MAY 28, 1989

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For a foreigner in China these days, this is a season for farewells.

"We shouldn't meet each other so often," an official who works in the Communist Party headquarters told a foreign reporter over coffee the other day. "It's too dangerous. In fact, I think we shouldn't meet at all."

Until 10 days ago, the official had looked forward to a glorious career in the Communist Party; now he is bracing himself, perhaps more pessimistically than necessary, for prison, as a supporter of the wrong faction.

"Maybe I will go abroad," he mused, "but I don't know if I can get a passport now. Anyway, it is best to stay away from foreigners."

Throughout the capital, previously bold intellectuals and party officials are rediscovering the virtues of caution. The exuberance of a few weeks ago has been replaced by a pall, a dread of arrests and mass dismissals. The fears are founded upon rumors, rather than facts, but in a country where so many people have had their careers ruined over the last three decades for political reasons, there is not much enthusiasm for taking risks. How Delightful: a Reporter

"I'm going back to the States," announced a young, Western-educated Chinese who returned to China not long ago to help the motherland. "I'm very worried

about what may happen. It's not safe here. Did you hear the rhetoric on television? I think there are going to be a lot of arrests."

It is not that all Chinese are cutting off their foreign contacts, but many are being more circumspect. And that sometimes results in social awkwardness when instinctive caution clashes with instinctive hospitality.

"Do come in! How delighted to see you!" muttered a Government official the other night when a reporter showed up at his home, but the official's face suggested that the correspondent was about as welcome as a tax auditor.

Some Chinese, profoundly embarrassed, murmur that it would be best for a foreign friend not to visit them at their homes, although they are willing to meet at restaurants. They implore the foreigner not to mention his name or theirs on the telephone, and they suggest that it is safer to speak English than Chinese because those who tap the phones may assume that two Americans are talking. 'They're Following Me'

"Do you see those two men?" asked a Chinese university teacher the other day. "They're following me."

Several other Chinese with foreign friends also report that they have been followed in the last few days, although it is difficult to say how much is real and how much is paranoia. However, whether or not it is justified, the belief that they have been followed is enough to arouse terror in most people. Even if they have done nothing illegal, many assume that the next step is arrest for themselves and disgrace for their families.

For the foreign reporters now swarming all over the capital, desperately trying to find out what is happening in the compounds of power, the calculations are different but no less troubling. There is a fervent desire to meet people and find out what is happening, but this is matched by a horror at the thought of ruining the lives of Chinese who are not only sources but also true friends.

And so for foreigners this is a season for saying goodbyes. Deng? Never Heard of Him

This fear of misstep is reverberating through the Chinese bureaucracy, leading to some of the same silliness that China has specialized in during past periods of political retrenchment. In early 1976, for example, a British journalist in Beijing first found out that Deng Xiaoping had fallen from power when she could not buy an official photograph of him. The reporter, Clare Hollingworth, recalls in her biography of Mao Zedong that the Government clerk she approached was

unhelpful.

"No one of the name of Deng Xiaoping has ever existed," he blithely announced, even though Mr. Deng was then officially still a Politburo member as well as Deputy Prime Minister.

These days, official news organizations have been equally unhelpful. The Chinese newspapers and news broadcasts have contained reports of robust economic growth and friendly cooperation between citizens and soldiers, but nary a reference to Zhao Ziyang, the man who may or may not be the Communist Party General Secretary. A Foreign Ministry spokesman, answering a reporter's question at a press conference on Thursday, announced that Mr. Zhao was "still" General Secretary but declined to elaborate on how long this would hold true. Persistent Rumors

After persistent rumors that the Foreign Ministry was withholding support for the Government of Prime Minister Li Peng, a reporter telephoned the Foreign Ministry's news hot line. Somewhat awkwardly, the reporter asked if the ministry recognized the Government of Mr. Li and of President Yang Shangkun.

"Let me take your question and I'll call you back," the young diplomat answered, as if handling the most normal query in the world. He said he would reply as soon as he found out the answer. Several hours later he called back. He sounded stunned at the reporter's ignorance as he gave the answer:

"Of course we recognize the Government." Where There's a Wall . . .

The Government has largely regained control over official news organizations, after a few weeks in which the newspapers were remarkably independent. But in the last few weeks another channel for disseminating news and ideas has sprung up all over the capital: posters.

Of course, "big character posters" have a long history in China as a medium of protest, and in the winter of 1978-79 a "Democracy Wall" emerged near the center of the city where dissidents could paste their essays and read the work of others. But the wall was soon closed down, and part of it was turned into a display case to show off China's scientific achievements.

Now, posters are sprouting up in the capital wherever there is a wall, a telephone poll or a street sign. Even the walls of Zhongnanhai, the compound of the Communist Party headquarters, is now plastered with political posters that draw crowds of enthusiastic readers. Many people copy the essays in their notebooks, to pass the contents on to friends and family.

Some of the posters are simply angry slogans, of which the most common is: "Li Peng, Step Down." But many are long essays, taking up many pages and criticizing the flaws of China's system of government. Lately, satirical essays have been in vogue, poking fun of Mr. Li and other leaders. Posters Draw Crowds

The posters draw crowds of readers because they are as sharp as the official newspapers are bland. One poster that has been pasted up on walls all over town is an open letter from teachers at universities in the Beijing area. It reads:

"A handful of conspirators headed by Li Peng and Yang Shangkun have launched a reactionary coup d'etat, compelling General Secretary Zhao Ziyang to step down. They unashamedly usurped the power of the party and the state, and moved more than 100,000 army troops around Beijing. Even now in the 1980's, they dared to impose martial law. This is a fascist coup d'etat."

Another poster warns that the leadership is trying to cause unrest and place the blame for it on the students to gain a pretext to suppress them. The poster warned that provocateurs were disguising themselves as students, and it suggested that the three men who threw paint on an enormous painting of Mao Zedong were sent by the Government to discredit the student demonstrators.

"The vandals insisted on being taken to the police," the poster alleged. "How strange!"

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