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TURMOIL IN CHINA; China Names a Culprit Behind Student Unrest

By NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF and SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES JUNE 10, 1989

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The television news this evening named as the real villain in the recent bloodshed someone whom most people had not even conceived of as a possible culprit.

The target of the broadcast, Fang Lizhi, a leading astrophysicist who is China's best-known dissident, had perhaps been overlooked because he does not own a gun and for weeks has carefully avoided the student encampment on Tiananmen Square, where troops killed hundreds, or possibly thousands, of civilians early this week.

Nevertheless, the television news accused Mr. Fang, who is now in the United States Embassy for his own protection, of being a traitor who incited the "rebellion" and provoked the violence.

The sharp attack underscored not only the passions that Mr. Fang, who is 53 years old, arouses on both sides of the Pacific, but also the difficulties that the United States and China will have in resolving the latest irritant to their relations.

Fang Lizhi (pronounced fahng lee-JER), his wife, Li Shuxian, and their son, Fang Ke, took refuge in the embassy because they feared arrest after the shooting of pro-democracy demonstrators in the center of the city on Sunday and Monday.

Statement by Bush

President Bush, at his news conference Thursday night, hinted at the United States'

reasoning in granting him protection.

"It is awful hard for the United States, when a man presents himself, a person who is a dissident, and says that his life is threatened - to turn him back," Mr. Bush said.

So now Mr. Fang and his family are living in the embassy, unable to leave the compound, and the Chinese side is daily raising the scale of its protests.

It is difficult to see how the situation can be quickly resolved, other than by Mr. Fang's taking his chances and leaving the compound on his own. China has long been sensitive to Mr. Fang's popularity abroad, as well as to the interference of foreign diplomats in China's political affairs, so it would be difficult to imagine the Government here pledging not to harm Mr. Fang if he leaves the embassy.

Indeed, even if the Government had not previously intended to arrest Mr. Fang, it may now feel obliged to - if it has the chance - just to show that it will not be intimidated.

"It's a very difficult situation," an Asian diplomat said tonight. "I think there's no way out through negotiation."

The incident is likely to symbolize to the Chinese Government the arrogance of the United States in using its diplomatic privileges to harbor people Beijing views as criminals, a particularly serious matter in China because of its historic sensitivity to foreigners regarding themselves as above Chinese law.

To Americans, on the other hand, the threats against a scholar and advocate of nonviolent democratic change are likely to symbolize Chinese repression and unreasonableness. The gulf between these two perspectives will be difficult to bridge so long as the present Chinese Government remains in place. An Infectious Laugh

Mr. Fang, the man catapulted to his role as an international incident by his search for a safe place for himself and his family, is China's own Happy Warrior for democracy. An ebullient man with black horn-rimmed glasses and a modest paunch, he copes with oppression and fear and risk by laughing a deep, rumbling laugh that inevitably infects those around him to smile even at the oddest moments.

"So maybe I will be arrested," he sometimes says, when reporters press him on the risks he takes, and then he lifts his head and exudes one of his famous laughs and everybody in the room suddenly feels that maybe it is not so serious after all.

Mr. Fang first came to national prominence several years ago when he was vice

president of the University of Science and Technology in the central Chinese city of Hefei. He became a promoter of greater democracy, and his ideas were widely discussed, but after the fall of the Communist Party leader Hu Yaobang in January 1987, Mr. Fang was expelled from the party and transferred to Beijing to work as a professor in the Beijing Observatory.

Miss Li, whom he met and married when they were both studying in Beijing, remains a party member, but both of them have been highly critical of Communist Party rule in China. They object to the network of perquisites for officials, the corruption, the lack of free speech, and they openly say Marxism is wrong.

Interviews in English

Mr. Fang acknowledges that a multi-party democracy cannot be introduced in China any time soon, but he thinks the nation should move in that direction. He has been popular among university students, and among foreigners, partly because until recently he was almost the only person openly attacking Marxism and calling for greater democracy. Mr. Fang also speaks English, which has enabled him to give television interviews to American audiences.

He was at the center of another diplomatic row when President Bush invited him to the banquet the United States was giving during the President's visit in February. Chinese leaders objected to the invitation to Mr. Fang, and then they sent more than 100 police officers to keep him out of the banquet. Mr. Fang, Miss Li and the two Americans they were with were obliged to walk for an hour and a half to the American Embassy, followed by the police the entire way.

The incident cast a pall over the otherwise successful visit of Mr. Bush to China, as both sides later traded recriminations over Mr. Fang's right to take part in the banquet.

The episode apparently confirmed the Chinese officials in their belief that Mr. Fang is a troublemaker, and he and Miss Li were accused - sometimes in anonymous wall posters - of inciting the democracy movement.

In fact, Mr. Fang and Miss Li both tried to avoid playing any role, for fear of being accused of being provocateurs, and they studiously kept away from Tiananmen Square when students were there. 'We Must Punish Him'

The American Embassy refused to arrange an interview with Mr. Fang, or to say anything at all about him. But in a recent meeting Mr. Fang seemed more tense and concerned than usual, and his laugh was not quite as forceful as it usually is.

The outrage felt by the Chinese Government over Mr. Fang's decision to seek

refuge in the American Embassy was evident in the letter read over television news describing him as a traitor.

"He incited the students and started this rebellion, and many people died because of this," the letter read. "He fled, but we must not let him escape. We must punish him."

By broadcasting the demand for punishment, the Government was in effect putting public pressure on itself to punish Mr. Fang, or at least to punish the American Government for harboring the dissident.

"His going for dinner was an irritant," a diplomat from a nonaligned country said. "So his becoming a permanent house guest will be an even worse problem."

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