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## TURMOIL IN CHINA; 3 CHINESE WORKERS SENTENCED TO DIE FOR PROTEST ROLE

By NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF and SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES JUNE 16, 1989

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In the first trial of Chinese pro-democracy demonstrators since the military crackdown 11 days ago, the Government today sentenced three young men to death for their role in a violent protest in Shanghai.

The sentence, which can be appealed in the next three days, seems to signal an even harsher policy than expected toward the approximately 1,000 people who are known so far to have been arrested around the nation. Many of the others who have been arrested are accused of worse crimes, so the sentence today suggests that they too could face the death penalty.

While executions would almost certainly further strain relations with other countries, they would drive home the hard-line message that the leadership seems determined to convey: that unrest will absolutely not be tolerated. Death Penalty Common

"My guess is we're going to enter into a stage of heavy intimidation to make sure people go back to work and stay at work," a diplomat in Shanghai said. "They've already killed a couple of thousand of people, so what's a couple of thousand more? You've got to look at it from their perspective."

The death penalty is relatively common in China, and is often enforced not

only against those convicted of murder or assault but also against those who are involved in large-scale corruption or who steal large sums of money. Executions are normally carried out within days of the trial, by shooting the convict in the base of the head.

The three workers who were sentenced to death today were charged in an incident that began on June 6 when demonstrators held a sit-in on a railway line to block traffic as a protest against the military crackdown in the capital two days earlier. A train rammed the demonstrators, killing six of them, and the protesters then attacked and set fire to the train. Firefighters Beaten

No one was killed in the fire, but some firefighters were beaten, and the burning of nine rail cars forced the closing of the railroad line for two days. It was not clear exactly what role each of the three men was said to have played in the incident, or what evidence there was for their involvement.

The three were apparently arrested Sunday and convicted Wednesday in a one-day trial. The sentencing was today and was succinctly reported by the official New China News Agency:

"Three criminals who severely damaged transport facilities at a railway crossing were sentenced to death and deprived of political rights by the Shanghai Intermediate People's Court." A Drab Courtroom

The deprivation of political rights is of marginal significance, both because of the impending execution and because in any case political rights in China have a limited scope.

The television news tonight showed a drab courtroom in Shanghai where the three men were told, one by one, of their sentence. A panel of judges read the sentence, as two police officers gripped each of the convicts tightly by the elbows. A crowd of several hundred spectators was present, but it was not clear how they were chosen or what their reaction was to the sentence.

The three workers are Xu Guoming, an employee of a Shanghai brewery; Bian Hanwu, who is unemployed, and Yan Xuerong, a worker at a radio factory. They appeared to be in their 20's or perhaps early 30's, and none were known as leaders of the anti-Government protests in Shanghai.

Mr. Bian stirred when the sentence was read, but the police immediately restrained him from moving further. The others did not appear to react to the sentence. Harder Line Against Workers

It may be significant that they were workers, rather than students, because the

Government has been particularly alarmed about the prospect of workers joining the unrest and going on strike.

For this reason, the Government has taken a harder line against workers than university students, and it is possible that students would also be dealt with more lightly because in general they were more involved in peaceful political demonstrations and less in actions like attacks on army units or official vehicles.

The New China News Agency said seven other defendants would soon face trial in Shanghai for similar crimes, although it did not say precisely when the trials would begin.

Official news organizations carried few criticisms today of the United States or of Fang Lizhi, the dissident who has taken refuge in the American Embassy in Beijing. But the television news did show a string of newly arrested students and workers.

Among those arrested was Zhang Lin, a 1988 graduate of Qinghua University in Beijing, who was shown -looking composed and bold - being led to a police station by two police officers and later being questioned. Seminars on Democracy

After graduation, Mr. Zhang, who is 25 years old, had returned to his home town of Benbu in Anhui Province to set up an educational program for local students and workers. He also held regular seminars to discuss and promote democracy.

The television news tonight accused Mr. Zhang of having contacts with Mr. Fang, but in an interview two months ago Mr. Zhang complained of the difficulty of seeing Mr. Fang and said he had been able to see only Mr. Fang's wife, Li Shuxian. He said he had been harassed by local security officials but predicted that democracy would triumph.

"The Government is still powerful enough to arrest us all," he said at the time, but he vowed to continue his efforts for more democracy.

Another student leader, Xiong Wei, also of Qinghua University, turned himself in to the authorities and was shown on television chatting with the police. Apparently because he had gone to the police, he was not in handcuffs and was not pulled around by the hair, as many of those arrested have been.

While Mr. Xiong was one of 21 student leaders on a wanted list circulated by the Government two days ago, he was one of the student leaders who consistently endorsed the leadership of the Communist Party.

"The leadership of the Communist Party can be a real democracy," he said in

an interview in late April. "I would like to join the party."

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