

Everything About the BBC/CNN Account of Tiananmen Square Is a Lie

By Godfree Roberts, CheckPoint Asia, 4 June 2019

Rather than a pro-Democracy protest with 10,000 mowed down it was an elite student reaction to fallout from Deng's reforms handled with kid gloves

- There was no “*Tiananmen Square Massacre*” as such. There was considerable loss of life in **two-sided** clashes in parts of Beijing adjacent to the square, but no firing into the crowd in the square of BBC/CNN tales.
- If anything, the Party’s reaction to the protest which shut down key portions of the capital city was very restrained (compared to what another government might do) and even supportive.
- The protestors weren’t after American-style institutions. The democracy they demanded was a Socialist-style participatory democracy eroded under Deng and not what is practiced in the west.
- There was considerable fallout from Deng’s reforms and especially the worker protestors had legitimate grievances, but the students were as much protesting injustices and restrictions, as they were afraid market liberalization was undermining their future status in society.

Imagine it’s midsummer. Students from Yale, Harvard, Princeton, Radcliffe, Columbia, Vassar, Smith, Brown, Wellesley, Cornell, Dartmouth and Penn are demonstrating outside the White House and flooding the Washington Mall with Dolce & Gabbana hoodies. They’ve been there for six weeks and, as their number has grown, their mood has darkened: corruption has triggered another downturn, there’s a crime wave and rampant inflation threatens employment prospects and the National Merit Scholarship program has been cancelled. Student leaders—some sponsored by a shadowy Chinese NGO, and recently returned from Beijing—say the failure to prosecute bankers is evidence of criminal conspiracy and government illegitimacy. The returnees are taunting the crowd for its cowardice, urging them to ignore the snipers on every roof and rush the White House. Inside, nervous staffers with sons and daughters, **nieces and nephews among the demonstrators**—try to discover which of them have been conspiring with the agitators.

Suddenly, simultaneously, all White House doors burst open and uniformed officers rush out bearing either (a) submachine guns, with which they open fire, slaughtering the children of America’s leading families, or (b) bottles of mineral water, slices of the First Lady’s birthday cake and an invitation to join the President that evening on the White House lawn for a barbecue and serious discussion.

In 1989, fourteen million Americans, six percent of the population were in college. That year two million Chinese kids, 0.2% of the population—the first post-war generation whose education was uninterrupted—an entire generation of its future leaders. The idea that any elite—let alone the child-worshipping Chinese—would murder its own children for demonstrating peacefully over legitimate grievances is even sillier than the notion that they were demonstrating about democracy. They were demonstrating about money and sex.

The only ‘democracy’ they wanted was the big character democracy they had learned under Mao: hence the re-appearance of big character posters—not seen since the government de-revolutionized the [Cultural Revolution](#) twenty years earlier. Mao had told them what to do when an incompetent government would force them to bear the burdens of its incompetence and corruption: bring out the Big Character Posters. He’d even tried to get big postering constitutionally guaranteed.

1989 was a most uncommon year: the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic, the seventieth anniversary of the May Fourth Movement, the centenary of the Second Communist Internationale and the bicentennial of the French Revolution. The USSR was coming unglued and Deng’s Reform and Opening had, says Orville Schell,^[1] ‘rammed Chinese society into reverse gear, stampeding the country into a form of unregulated capitalism that made the U.S. and Europe seem almost socialist by comparison’. **Radical market-price reforms caused a major inflation and popular, student and worker unrest.**

[Elizabeth Perry](#) wrote:

“The Cultural Revolution left a significant mark on popular protests in post-Mao China. **Repertoires of collective political action popularized during the Cultural Revolution—such as singing revolutionary songs, marches, rallies, and hunger strikes—had a great impact on the 1989 protest movement.**

The haunting specter of the Cultural Revolution also had a crucial impact on the Deng regime’s interpretation of—and thereby reaction to—the movement.

Over three decades after China ventured down the path of capitalist marketization, the bleak reality of growing socioeconomic disparity, environmental degradation, massive layoffs of workers in state-owned enterprises, evisceration of social protections, rampant official corruption, illicit appropriation of public property, and exploitation of rural migrant labor has led to the unravelling of the broad but fragile consensus regarding the direction and rationality of post-Mao reforms that dominated Chinese intellectual discussions of the 1980s”.

Reform and Opening—as far as common people could see—was a disaster and little was needed to light the fires of protest, according to Suzanne Pepper:^[2]

With the multiple economic and political crises of 1988 and 1989, the consequences of Deng Xiaoping’s decade of reform for higher education, at least, might better be categorized as a major tragedy for all concerned. Deng’s decade had begun with great fanfare, high hopes, and the total reversal of Cultural Revolution priorities.

During the spring 1988 academic meetings, the comments of Beijing University President Ding Shisun in particular created a sensation both because of their candor in criticizing official policies, “Some people ask me whether as Beijing University president I fear student protests, but I answer that what I fear most is not having enough money”. This provoked heated discussions among delegates and a satirical demonstration by a handful of student protesters who gathered in Tiananmen Square offering to shine delegates’ shoes.

By then, the imperatives driving the student protest movement had already taken on a life of their own. The most important issues were high prices, widespread corruption and the special privileges enjoyed by the families of high-level officials who appeared to benefit more than others from the new opportunities to engage in trade and travel. The students also began demanding the unhindered right to protest such negative consequences as they saw fit, once it became apparent that the authorities were trying to stop them. Between mid-October and December 1985, virtually every provincial and city Party secretary in the country visited every leading university and personally listened to students’ complaints. **Inherent in the popular response was an undercurrent of Maoist mass-line or “work unit” democracy that was**

obviously different from both the Western and Deng Xiaoping's anti-bureaucratic conceptions.

Thus while student demonstrators were occupying Tiananmen Square in May, one middle-aged, middle-ranking Beijing cadre remarked to a friend during a visit to Shenzhen that "Mao would have sent someone out to talk to them."

The cadre went on to explain that workers and cadres alike in her industrial system felt they had much less opportunity to 'participate' within that system now than in the 1970s, when meetings were called for every problem and people could raise opinions that today would result in their dismissal.

Preparations for the next phase of the student movement were thus essentially in place when Hu Yaobang died suddenly in mid-April and provided the perfect, if unanticipated, link. Later demands would include more pointed references to inflation, the special privileges of cadres, Swiss bank accounts and so on, but the leading concerns throughout were political. Among the first were seven drafted on April 23 by students from nineteen Beijing colleges and universities:

1. reassess Hu Yaobang's [an official much loved by the students] merits and demerits;
2. allow the people to run newspapers;
3. increase educational funding and raise the pay of intellectuals;
4. reevaluate the 1986 student movement and the opposition to bourgeois liberalization;
5. make public the truth of the April 20, 1989, incident (when police allegedly beat student demonstrators);
6. oppose corruption, oppose bureaucratism and severely punish official profiteering;
7. report truthfully all the events from the death of Hu Yaobang to the student demonstrations in Tiananmen Square.

In April, students and workers began massive demonstrations in Beijing and Shanghai, **denouncing Deng Xiaoping's reforms on placards, "It doesn't matter if the cat is black or white, so long as the cat resigns"**.

[Dongpin Han](#), a student at the time, tells how the sudden relaxation of price controls set off bank runs, panic buying and hoarding. Crime was rampant and the country was ripe for destabilization:

"Official corruption had disrupted China's economy. The government, facing bankruptcy, had printed more money in 1984 than in the previous thirty-five years combined. Prices of commodities, previously State-controlled and stable, exploded. Meat rose five hundred percent.

My parents had saved two thousand yuan. They'd bought their first house for four hundred yuan then, overnight, their savings lost 90 percent of their value. My mother rushed to the store and bought two hundred feet of plain cloth. Her neighbour bought four hundred pounds of salt and another bought forty TV sets. They believed that war-era inflation had returned and their money would become worthless.

People started publicly denouncing corrupt officials and their children's promotion to high office. Beijing's Consumer Price Index had jumped 30% in 1988 and salaried workers panicked when they could no longer afford staples. State-owned enterprises were pressured to cut costs. Mao's iron rice bowl—job security and social benefits ranging from medical care to subsidized housing—were suddenly at risk".

State owned companies dumped millions of workers into the labor market and inflation consumed their severance pay, designed to last six months, in as many weeks. Graduates found themselves in the worst employment market since the war where, it seemed, only those with political connections got hired. **A survey showed that the average university graduate earned less than high school matriculants.** Government subsidies were cut to the bone and

professors' incomes reduced. **Peasants who followed Deng's admonition to 'get rich' were getting rich, enraging social elites who demanded [3] 'more money for education and higher pay for intellectuals'.**

The Toronto Sun's Eric Margolis wrote:

"This reaction to Deng's policies was reflected not only in the Maoist sympathies of some Chinese students but also in the broad demands put forward by the student movement. The 1989 events were, at their core, a political civil war within the CCP where the weapons used went beyond the back rooms and onto the street: students and workers with real grudges due to rapid changes ended up being manipulated by factions within the CCP and foreign conspirators—and things got pretty out of hand".

The withdrawal of Mao's tuition subsidies crushed the dreams of millions of families thirsting for education and the government's decision to maintain scholarships for African students touched off race riots. Thousands of Nanjing students chanted demands for reform, waved signs like "Kill the black devils!" and **rampaged** through the Africans' student quarters, injuring many. The anti-African demonstrations spread to Beijing where, late on the night of April 19, student militants carrying banners saying, "No Offend Chinese Women," yelling "Kill the foreigners!" and screaming insults at Deng marched on Party leaders' living quarters at Zhongnanhai.

As eyewitness Lee Feigon:

"The police seemed remarkably tolerant, unflustered by the constant jeering and screaming. Many who watched doubted that the American Secret Service would have reacted so genially if a similar mob were battering on the gates of the White House in the middle of the night.

This was carried to an extreme at about 2:30 a.m. when the police tried to clear the crowd and some of them were pushed back onto a cluster of fallen bicycles. One tough picked up one of the bikes and smashed it over the head of one of the police. He was not arrested".

Squabbling within the Forbidden City, where opposition to Deng's Reform and Opening was still powerful among Maoists, reflected the turmoil in the Square. Conservatives and progressives struggled to implement contradictory policies and **Hu Yaobang's** unexpected death left no trusted interlocutor. Demonstrations intensified **when students marched into Tiananmen Square on April 26 singing the Internationale and holding aloft portraits of Mao.** Lee Feigon:

"The leaders of a prominent student group hung big pictures of Mao in the tents they pitched on the square. They talked openly and boldly about the good old days of the Cultural Revolution. Mao, they felt, had the right ideas although he sometimes used wrong tactics. Now they were determined to use what they considered the right ones".

Like their American counterparts, whose dreams died at Kent State, China's New Left knew the value of publicity. **They expected repression and openly provoked it but, to their considerable surprise, provoked mostly sympathy.** The Party's reform wing hailed them as 'bearers of the spirit of socialist democracy' and *The Peoples Daily* gave them front-page photo spreads and adulatory coverage with headlines like, 'A Million from All Walks of life Demonstrate in Support of Hunger-Striking Students,' 'Save the Students! Save the Children!' The *Guangming Daily* ran front-page stories like, "The conditions of the students and the future of the country touch the heart of every Chinese who has a conscience". Clearly, the students were not alone.

At the height of the turmoil organizers met with Party leaders and CCTV broadcast the meeting nationwide to millions sympathetic to their demands for an end to corruption and the crime

wave Deng's reforms had unleashed. By May 18, support for the students was so strong that the *The Peoples Daily* pushed coverage of Russian President Gorbachev's state visit below the fold to feature their demands. **Capitalizing on television coverage of Gorbachev's visit, protesters blocked the Square and announced a hunger strike. The government responded by sending ten thousand doctors and nurses, one hundred ambulances and teams of sanitation workers and portable toilets.**

The hunger strikers insisted on further dialog and, when the government complied, demanded that Deng retire, troops stationed outside the city be dispersed and martial law revoked and presented four demands.

(1) better treatment for intellectuals, including more money for education, better salaries and job assignments after graduation.

(2) An end to pervasive official corruption and to preferential treatment for relatives of Party officials in getting lucrative jobs and better living arrangements and education.

(3) Hu Yaobang's political reforms, including more government accountability and responsiveness to citizens' ideas and opinions and broader input into government policy.

(4) Respect for constitutionally guaranteed freedoms like freedom to demonstrate, freedom of speech and freedom of the press. (As these reforms were made in subsequent years the government's trust and approval ratings rose steadily, reaching Olympian heights with Xi's ending pervasive political corruption.)

The students received large sums of money from ordinary citizens, from foreign tourists and organizations abroad and worker activists claimed to have witnessed a 'chaos of money' and accused the leadership of pocketing it for themselves. The size and quality of tents and sleeping mats purchased with donated funds, they noted, 'were allocated among student leaders according to their relative rank.' Carried away by self-importance, like the elderly Party leaders they despised, they became steadily less available to the press and their bodyguards refused access to journalists without multiple ID cards and press passes.

CNN's Mike Chinoy^[4] recalled, "The bickering students began to display the same bureaucratic and autocratic tendencies in their People's Republic of Tiananmen Square that they were trying to change in the government". Vito Maggioli, CNN's assignment manager, recalled how, by late May, camera crews and producers would come back after reporting on events in the Square, complaining about the bureaucracy the students had created, with some even referring to student leaders as 'fascists.'

Nor did student leaders welcome those who suffered the reforms' cruelest effects, common workers. Andrew Walder and Gong Xiaoxia^[5] said a member of the Workers' Autonomous Federation found the students were 'especially unwilling' to meet members of the Construction Workers' Union, whom they drove from the Square, considering them as lowly 'convict laborers'. They 'were always rejecting us workers. They thought we were uncultured. We demanded participation in the dialogue with the government but the students wouldn't let us. They considered us workers to be crude, stupid, reckless, and incapable of negotiating'.

In response to their exclusivity, the workers produced their own charter inviting all to join and 'members took pride in the fact that their leaders would talk freely with city people of all walks of life and peasants as well, and that the 'democratic forum' of their broadcasting station was open to any and all statements from the audience.'

The workers added that they ‘observed in the student leaders and in their movement many of the faults of the nation’s leaders and their political system: hierarchy, secrecy, condescension toward ordinary people, factionalism, struggles for power, and even special privilege and corruption’.

The situation was volatile, but violence would require a catalyst, and the CIA was ready and eager to provide it. Having overthrown Iran’s government in 1953, South Vietnam’s in 1963 and Chile’s in 1973, the Agency moved its team of coupsters to Beijing. **As *The Vancouver Sun* reported,** “For months before the June 3 attack on the demonstrators, the CIA had been helping student activists form the anti-government movement, providing typewriters, facsimile machines and other equipment to help them spread their message, said one official”.

The CIA moved Gene Sharp, author of the Color Revolution manual, to Beijing where financier George Soros had incorporated the eponymous *Fund for the Reform and Opening of China*.

CIA Director George H.W. Bush withdrew Ambassador Winston Lord from Beijing and replaced him with James Lilley, an operative experienced in regime change. Bush and Lilley had been close friends since the early 1970s when Lilley was the head of station for the CIA in Beijing and Bush was Chief of Mission and *de facto* Ambassador. In 1975, as Bush was returning to Washington from Beijing to head the CIA he appointed Lilley National Intelligence Officer for China, the highest-ranked expert on China in the American intelligence community.

Lilley had made contact with Premier Zhao Ziyang who wanted China to adopt privatized media, freedom to organize, an independent judiciary, a multiparty parliamentary democracy, privatization of state-owned assets, the separation of Party and State and market-oriented economic reforms.

In 1986 Soros endowed his *Fund for the Reform and Opening of China* with one million dollars—a huge sum for China those days—to promote cultural and intellectual exchanges with Zhao’s Institute for Economic Structural Reform. **In 1988 the National Endowment for Democracy opened two offices in China, gave regular seminars on democracy, sponsored select Chinese writers and publications and recruited Chinese students studying in US.** In February 1989, two months before the CIA launched its Tiananmen destabilization campaign, President Bush paid his first and only visit to China.

When the student protests erupted in late April the NED mailed thousands of inflammatory letters from Washington to recipients in China and aroused public opinion through Voice of America (VOA) shortwave radio broadcasts, in Mandarin, across China on the days of the protests. In Nanjing, university students had boom-boxes turned high as the VOA described events in China.

Deng had CIA strategist Gene Sharp arrested and expelled to British Hong Kong, whence he directed the insurrection, as he recounts in his memoir, [Non-Violent Struggle in China](#). Another CIA operative, VOA’s Beijing chief, Alan Pessin, provided encouragement, provocation, strategic guidance and tactical advice in round-the-clock broadcasts and students who were there still talk of the VOA’s promised land of ‘freedom and democracy’.

The Taiwan-funded Chinese Alliance for Democracy issued an Open Letter from New York which, posted in Beijing University’s Triangle on April 26, called for ‘consolidating the organizational links established during the movement, strengthening the contacts with the critics and strengthening support for the movement within all sectors of society’. The Taiwanese government provided \$1 million for equipment and flew its most prominent member (and future Nobel) Liu Xiaobo from Washington to lead the protests. The students’

local leader Chai Ling, secretly holding a US visa, angrily accused Liu of using the student movement to 'rebuild his own image'.

The stage was set for violence. Moderate student leaders argued that, having made their point, the students should withdraw and live to fight another day but Chai Ling commanded^[6] them to stay because, she explained:

"Some fellow students asked me what our plans are, what our demands will be in future. This made me feel sick at heart; I started out to tell them that what we were waiting for was actually the spilling of blood, for only when the government descends to the depths of depravity and decides to deal with us by slaughtering us, only when rivers of blood flow in the Square, will the eyes of our country's people truly be opened... **But how could I tell them this? How could I tell them that their lives would have to be sacrificed in order to win?**"

Wang Yam, her fellow organizer, publicly supported Chai Ling's call for violence and gave government conservatives the excuse they needed, as one Long March veteran put it: "**Those goddamn bastards! Who do they think they are, trampling on sacred ground like Tiananmen? They're really asking for it!** We should send the troops right now to grab those counter-revolutionaries! What's the People's Liberation Army for, anyway? What are the martial law troops for? They're not supposed to just sit around and eat!"

At midnight on June 3, six weeks after the protests began, troops began moving from the railway station into the city **under orders not to fire unless fired upon**. An officer later testified at the official enquiry, "If we had been allowed to let ourselves go, one battalion would have been quite sufficient to quell the riot but, with rioters hiding behind onlookers, we had to stay our hand".

On the way in one soldier was seized, thrown from an overpass and killed, another doused with gasoline and set alight, one was clubbed to death and disemboweled and three major-generals were attacked and hospitalized. Rioters looted weapons and ammunition from captured trucks and attacked government buildings. Leaders distributed knives, iron bars, bricks and chains, urging people to 'take up arms and overthrow the government'.

At six the following evening loudspeakers told Beijingers to remain indoors as troops had been ordered to suppress the uprising by force and, **when the soldiers moved in, rioters burned hundreds of vehicles, including sixty armored cars and thirty police cars**. NYU Professor James C. Hsiung watched^[7] the action from his perch in the Beijing Hotel:

After midnight, I saw troops trotting on foot from the East towards Tiananmen Square, without helmets or weapons. As they were approaching the square, they were blocked by huge crowds and were forced to retreat, trotting back in the direction (east) they had come from. On their retreat route, the troops were chased by the crowds, many throwing rocks and bricks. Not long after, troops returned by truck, this time with helmets on and weapons in hand. By then, the crowds had set up more roadblocks. **As the trucks were negotiating their way through, the crowds stopped them with a barrage of rocks. This free-for-all went on for some time, during which many soldiers were either killed or wounded; and some lost their weapons to the ruffians. Then came the armored reinforcements spitting sporadic fire, apparently in revenge, into the crowds along both sides of the road.** Besides the ruffians and students, many were merely onlookers. The crowds, however, fought back hard. They climbed atop the on-coming tanks. Some even used Molotov cocktails or the equivalents of a flame-thrower against the tanks. One tank went ablaze. As the three soldiers inside opened the latch to run away from the heat, some hooligans shouted: "Kill them, kill them!" **A BCC (Taiwan) radio reporter on the scene recorded the shouting. He later told me that he saw the three soldiers killed by their maulers.** A Chinese-American friend, in whose house I had been a dinner guest only two nights before, later called and told me that a similar attack took place in front of their apartment building. **One soldier's corpse, lying by an incinerated troop-**

carrier truck, I was told, was set on fire by his killers, who had poured gasoline on the body. In all the cases we knew, the ruffians were much older than most college students and did not appear to be students at all.

Informed that troops were approaching Tiananmen Square and shooting had started, the students began withdrawing at 5 am and were gone by 6:30. [*Le clashes took place around the square, but never on it.*] Journalist Che Muqi^[8] recounts his conversation with Kong Xiangzhi, a professor at Chinese People's University:

At about 12:10 a.m., the troops marched in from West Chang'an Avenue. I was sitting on the steps outside the West entrance of the Great Hall of the People. When the troops marched towards the square, I saw a group of people throwing rocks at them. When a few soldiers went up to them, they ran southwards. These soldiers fired into the air. Then some other soldiers came up but they didn't shoot at the crowds, otherwise I would have been shot, since I was now on the sidewalk.

I walked to the East entrance of the Great Hall where several hundred soldiers were sitting and some people were talking with them. The atmosphere seemed friendly. **When I saw someone binding up a wound for a young soldier, I went up to help and asked him how he had been wounded. He told me he had been hit by rocks. He also told me that many of his comrades had also been wounded. I saw many whose heads, arms or hands were bound with gauze. I told him that I believed that the majority of the students and residents would not do this. He agreed with me.**

Then, an officer came to talk with us. He said that the troops would never open fire on the masses or the students. At about 3:30 a.m., the troops began to fall in. The officer then said to his men: "We're going in to clear out the square. Now I want to make clear that no-one is permitted to shoot at the students or people; right now, this is the highest form of discipline".

About 4:10 a.m. all the lights at the square went out. A lot of soldiers came out from the East entrance of the Great Hall. I sat down to watch under the pine trees, feeling excited and nervous. I was nervous because this was the first time I had seen so many soldiers carrying guns and I didn't know how they were going to clear up the square. ...At about 4:30, the martial law troops announced over the loudspeaker, "Attention, students. We have agreed to your appeal. We will allow you to leave peacefully". The announcement was broadcast over and over again. At about 4:50, the students around the monument began to leave. I looked around and saw that there was almost no one in sight. So I came back with the students. That was at 5:05 a.m. This was what I saw at the time. No one was killed throughout the whole process. **Some people with ulterior motives who had fled abroad spread rumors that Tiananmen Square had been a blood-bath and that they had had to crawl out from underneath the corpses, which was sheer nonsense.**

Famous Taiwanese entertainer Hou Dejian summarized his [experience](#) of the finale, "Some people said that two hundred died in the Square and others claimed that two thousand died. There were also stories of tanks running over students who were trying to leave. I have to say that I did not see any of that. I don't know where those people died. I myself was in the Square until six-thirty in the morning". Future Nobelist Liu Xiaobo remained to the end and said he saw nobody harmed.

On June 19, Beijing Party Secretary Li Ximing delivered the results of the official enquiry. More than 7,000 were wounded or injured and two hundred forty one killed, including thirty-six students, ten soldiers and thirteen People's Armed Police during a riot in Chang'An Road.



For all its failures, tragedies and confusions, the Tiananmen incident ranks among the most successful propaganda campaigns in history. Long after the massacre story was disproved, foreign journalists—all of whom had left the Square—told readers that students had been demanding Western values in the face of ‘Red Chinese totalitarianism’. Their fabricated massacre gave the West an excuse to embargo China yet again, and to label it an international human rights pariah.

Some journalists, sinologists and officials had second thoughts. “I believe we tried to put a ‘made in the USA’ democracy stamp on it,” said Jackie Judd^[9] of ABC. Photographer Jeff Widener^[10] said he took the Tank Man photograph on June 5, more than a day after the students had left the Square. (Associated Press still distributes the image as if it were from June 4, so look for it).



Widener's photo shows a man stopping four tanks but another [photograph](#), taken by Stuart Franklin a few seconds earlier, shows nineteen tanks behind Widener's four and makes it clear that the tanks are leaving the Square, driving east, out of the city.



And the story continued to leak out abroad:[\[11\]](#)

CIA man misread reaction, sources say. Vancouver Sun.

WASHINGTON – THE CIA STATION chief in China left the country two days before Chinese troops attacked demonstrators in the capital Beijing in 1989, after predicting the military would not act, U.S. officials said. China's government had declared martial law 12 days earlier and moved tens of thousands of troops to the outskirts of Beijing in preparation for removing the demonstrators from Tiananmen Square.

The Central Intelligence Agency had sources among protesters, as well as within China's intelligence services with which it enjoyed a close relationship since the 1970s, said the officials, who spoke this week on condition of anonymity.

For months before the June 3 attack on the demonstrators, the CIA had been helping student activists form the anti-government movement, providing typewriters, facsimile machines and other equipment to help them spread their message, said one official.

In the weeks leading up to the 1989 bloodshed, the CIA monitored the growing tension closely using its case officers, diplomats at the U.S. embassy, and a network of informers among the students who led the protest. But as the protest lost steam, the chief of the CIA station decided the threat of confrontation had been defused, said one official. The CIA declined all comment".

The BBC's Beijing correspondent, James Miles, [confessed](#) to having "Conveyed the wrong impression, and that there was no massacre in Tiananmen Square. Protesters who were still in the square when the army reached it were allowed to leave after negotiations with martial law troops... There was no Tiananmen Square massacre".

But, even after *The Columbia Journalism Review* discredited[12] the massacre story and WikiLeaks released Ambassador James Lilley's July 12 (a month after the events) cable, few editors were interested.

OF JUNE 3-4 EVENTS ON TIANANMEN SQUARE

1. CONFIDENTIAL – ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY- DURING A RECENT MEETING, A LATIN AMERICAN DIPLOMAT AND HIS WIFE PROVIDED POLOFF AN ACCOUNT OF THEIR MOVEMENTS ON JUNE 3-4 AND THEIR EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT OF EVENTS AT TIANANMEN SQUARE. ALTHOUGH THEIR ACCOUNT GENERALLY FOLLOWS THOSE PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, THEIR UNIQUE EXPERIENCES PROVIDE ADDITIONAL INSIGHT AND CORROBORATION OF EVENTS IN THE SQUARE. THEY WERE ABLE TO ENTER AND LEAVE THE SQUARE SEVERAL TIMES AND WERE NOT HARASSED BY TROOPS. REMAINING WITH STUDENTS BY THE MONUMENT TO THE PEOPLE'S HEROES UNTIL THE FINAL WITHDRAWAL, **THE DIPLOMAT SAID THERE WERE NO MASS SHOOTINGS OF STUDENTS IN THE SQUARE OR AT THE MONUMENT. END SUMMARY.** (Emphasis mine – WE)

8. GALLO [Chilean Second Secretary Carlos Gallo and his wife] EVENTUALLY ENDED UP AT THE RED CROSS STATION, AGAIN HOPING THAT TROOPS WOULD NOT FIRE ON THE MEDICAL PERSONNEL THERE. **HE WATCHED THE MILITARY ENTER THE SQUARE AND DID NOT OBSERVE ANY MASS FIRING OF WEAPONS INTO THE CROWDS,** ALTHOUGH SPORADIC GUNFIRE WAS HEARD. HE SAID THAT **MOST OF THE TROOPS WHICH ENTERED THE SQUARE WERE ACTUALLY ARMED ONLY WITH ANTI-RIOT GEAR—TRUNCHEONS AND WOODEN CLUBS...** (Emphasis added – WE)

10. **ALTHOUGH GUNFIRE COULD BE HEARD, GALLO SAID THAT APART FROM SOME BEATING OF STUDENTS, THERE WAS NO MASS FIRING INTO THE CROWD OF STUDENTS AT THE MONUMENT.** WHEN POLOFF MENTIONED SOME REPORTEDLY EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS OF MASSACRES AT THE MONUMENT WITH AUTOMATIC WEAPONS, GALLO SAID THAT THERE WAS NO SUCH SLAUGHTER. ONCE AGREEMENT WAS REACHED FOR THE STUDENTS TO WITHDRAW, LINKING HANDS TO FORM A COLUMN, THE STUDENTS LEFT THE SQUARE THROUGH THE SOUTHEAST CORNER. ESSENTIALLY EVERYONE, INCLUDING GALLO, LEFT. THE FEW THAT ATTEMPTED TO REMAIN BEHIND WERE BEATEN AND DRIVEN TO JOIN THE END OF THE DEPARTING PROCESSION. ONCE OUTSIDE THE SQUARE, THE STUDENTS HEADED WEST ON QIANMEN DAJIE WHILE GALLO HEADED EAST TO HIS CAR. (Emphasis mine – WE)

The Public Security Ministry issued arrest warrants for twenty-one demonstrators including Liu Xiaobo, Wang Dan, Wu'er Kaixi, Liu Gang and Chai Ling, but the CIA's Operation Yellowbird had already exfiltrated four hundred leaders to Western countries. Ambassador Lilley claimed that America was involved in 'almost exclusively legal exfiltrations,' though it was later [proven](#) that Hong Kong's notorious Sun Yee On criminal triad was involved.

A few months after the event Deng [discussed](#) the incident with Chinese-American academic Li Zhengdao, "In suppressing the turmoil we were at pains to avoid hurting people, especially the students; that was our guiding principle" and **criticized his colleague Zhao Ziyang whom, he said, "was clearly exposed as siding with the agitators and attempting to split the Party"** and reportedly told West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, "the students should not be blamed too much. The roots of the problem lay within the leadership of the Party".

In [The Legacy of Tiananmen](#) James A. R. Miles explained:

“A year after Tiananmen, Deng elaborated on his fears of civil war during a meeting with the former Canadian prime minister Pierre Trudeau. ‘You can imagine,’ Deng said, ‘what China in turmoil would be like. If turmoil erupts in China, it wouldn’t just be a Cultural Revolution-type problem. At that time (during the Cultural Revolution) you still had the prestige of the elder generation of leaders such as Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai. Even though it was described as ‘all-out civil war,’ actually there wasn’t any major fighting. It wasn’t a proper civil war. Now it’s not at all the same. If turmoil erupts again, to the extent that the party is no longer effective and state power is no longer effective and one faction grabs one part of the army and another faction grabs another part of the army—that would be civil war. If some so-called democratic fighters seize power, they’ll start fighting among themselves. **As soon as civil war breaks out there’ll be rivers of blood. What would be the point then of talking about ‘human rights’? As soon as civil war breaks out, local warlords will spring up everywhere, production will plummet, communications will be severed, and it won’t be a matter of a few million or even tens of millions of refugees. There’d be well over a hundred million people fleeing the country and the first to be affected would be Asia, now the most promising part of the world. It would be a global disaster”**”.

Singapore’s Lee Kwan Yew later [said](#) he would have shot 200,000 demonstrators to maintain stability and **U.S. Ambassador Charles Freeman [opined:](#)**

“I cannot conceive of any American government behaving with the ill-conceived restraint that the Zhao Ziyang administration did in China, allowing students to occupy zones that are the equivalent of the Washington National Mall and Times Square combined, while shutting down much of the Chinese government’s normal operations””.

The CIA’s operational analysis attributed the failure to ‘the difficulty of mobilizing young activists in the desired direction due to lack of strong polarizations in Chinese society’ and Chinese analysts attributed the lack of strong polarizations in Chinese society to the [Cultural Revolution](#), which Mao had conducted specifically for that purpose.

Students had discovered their leader, Chai Ling, leaving the square and, accusing her of abandoning them to die, detained her. She escaped and recorded a speech saying that she witnessed at least twenty students and workers being massacred in the Square. **She was given a scholarship to Princeton University and nominated for the 1990 Nobel Peace Prize.** Though he had left the Square hours before the military arrived, another leader, Wu’er Kaixi claimed that he witnessed tanks killing hundreds of protesters by driving over them as they slept. Liu Xiaobo, later awarded the Nobel Peace Prize helped the students avoid bloodshed and was pardoned. He, too, said that nobody in the Square was harmed.

The vice-president of the Tiananmen student body and leader of the riot in Chang’An Avenue, Wang Yam, was smuggled to the UK and given British citizenship. In 2006 he was [tried](#) in London, in the first British murder trial to be held in secret, for bludgeoning to death an elderly man. The Crown Prosecutor demanded that Wang’s trial be held *in camera* and the trial judge assented and gagged media speculation. Wang Yam was convicted of first degree murder and MI6, Britain’s intelligence agency, admitted that he was their employee.

In 1998, President Bill Clinton discussed the incident with President Jiang Zemin, as John Border[13] reported:

“The drama of the meeting came in a remarkable 70-minute news conference, carried live on nationwide Chinese television, in which the two Presidents differed sharply on the nature of personal freedom, the role of the state and the meaning of the Tiananmen Square demonstrations that were violently suppressed by the Chinese Government in June 1989...Mr. Clinton flatly told the Chinese leader that his Government had been ‘wrong’ to use force to end the peaceful demonstrations of the spring of 1989 and that broad personal freedom and political

expression were the price of admission to the world community of the 21st century. ‘For all of our agreements, we still disagree about the meaning of what happened then,’ Mr. Clinton said in his opening statement, referring to the violent crackdown on Tiananmen Square the night of June 3-4, 1989, that left hundreds of protesters dead”.

Three years after Tiananmen, in response to demonstrations in Los Angeles, President Bush sent in thousands of troops saying “*There can be no excuse for the murder, arson, theft or vandalism that have terrorized the people of Los Angeles... Let me assure you that I will use whatever force is necessary to restore order*”. Sixty-six people died, **eleven thousand were arrested, and the media called the President’s action ‘decisive’**. **The following year, when President Clinton ordered federal forces to attack a Christian community in Waco, Texas, they killed eighty-one men, women and children. No-one was disciplined.**

Notes

[1] Mandate of Heaven: The Legacy of Tiananmen Square and the Next Generation. By Orville Schell.

[2] China’ Education Reform in the 1980s Policies, Issues, and Historical Perspectives. SUZANNE PEPPER. 1990. INSTITUTE OF EAST ASIAN STUDIES UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT BERKELEY CENTER FOR CHINESE STUDIES.

[3] China Rising: The Meaning of Tiananmen https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0929587308/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0929587308&linkCode=as2&tag=inpraiseofchi-20&linkId=fe9aef54d84dbb0f5e056169f9f74077.

[4] Mike Chinoy, *China Live: Two Decades in the Heart of the Dragon*, p.242.

[5] University Workers in the Tiananmen Protests: The Politics of the Beijing Workers’ Autonomous Federation. Author(s): Andrew G. Walder and Gong Xiaoxia Source: The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs, No. 29 (Jan., 1993), pp. 1-29.

[6] *Cries for Democracy: Writings and Speeches from the 1989 Chinese Democracy Movement* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1990), p. 327.

[7] When the author queried Dr. Hsiung, he replied, “It could have been in a paper (report) I gave at a meeting in New York. The meeting had been scheduled long before the June 4 1989. I was supposed to give a paper at the meeting. But, since I had come only a few days before when the meeting took place, I did not have the time to write a paper. So, I gave a report on what I witnessed at the Tiananmen Square, instead.

I can assure you that I received very strong, almost tumultuous, reactions in response. One person in the audience even said: “Don’t think you can fool us. We witnessed it too, from the TV shorts”. So, watching TV made him an eye witness, too.

If you can read Chinese, I did have an article written on the 20th anniversary of the June 4th tragedy, titled: “一個天安門事件‘變相受害者’的喊冤回憶”, (The Painful Reminiscences of a “Virtual Victim“ of the Tiananmen Event, published in Taiwan’s Straits’ Review (海峽評論) , No. 223 (July, 2009), pp. 173-178.

The Straits Review can be reached by e-mail at: <sreview@ms47.hinet.net>.

If you write, pls. ask for Mr. Shu-tao FU (福蜀濤) 。 He knows me. In fact, he asked me for the article.

[8] Che Muqi: «Beijing turmoil – More than meets the eye», Foreign language press, Beijing 1990, ISBN 0-8351-2459-2; 7-119-01305-X

https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0835124592/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creat

[ive=9325&creativeASIN=0835124592&linkCode=as2&tag=inpraiseofchi-20&linkId=8ae5ac33198984828ff0fdb336af8833](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B000APR000?ref=9325&creativeASIN=0835124592&linkCode=as2&tag=inpraiseofchi-20&linkId=8ae5ac33198984828ff0fdb336af8833)

[9] Coverage of the Crisis

TURMOIL AT TIANANMEN

A STUDY OF U.S. PRESS COVERAGE OF THE BEIJING SPRING OF 1989.

[10] *Behind the Scenes: Tank Man of Tiananmen*, NYT

[11] The Vancouver Sun; Vancouver, B.C. [Vancouver, B.C]17 Sep 1992: A20 (1st Edition)

[12] *The Myth of Tiananmen*

[13] The New York Times <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/06/28/world/clinton-china-overview-clinton-jiang-debate-views-live-tv-clashing-rights.html>.