Turmoil at Tiananmen: A Study Of U.S. Press Coverage of the Beijing Spring of 1989

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Joan Shorenstein Barone Center on
the Press, Politics and Public Policy

John F. Kennedy School of Government

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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FOREWORD

by

Marvin Kalb

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For those of us at the Shorenstein Barone Center who have been working on this report on U.S. press and tv coverage of the Tiananmen crackdown on June 4, 1989, it would be unseemly to allow this weekend to pass so quietly, so unremarkably, without a nod in the direction of that extraordinary time. It's exactly three years since Chinese troops attacked anti-government students in downtown Beijing, using tanks and machine guns. Hundreds, possibly thousands, of Chinese were killed or wounded, and the words of a popular song became their battlecry: "We will never forget!" But we do forget.

For a time the battlecry sounded from one end of the world to the other: newspaper headlines insistently demanded popular attention and governmental action, especially in the United States and Western Europe; Tiananmen produced "live" and dramatic television pictures; news magazines felt obliged to redo their covers. One picture especially, of a single man in an unbelievable standoff with a column of tanks, seemed destined for the history and journalism books. And yet, to judge from this

weekend's newspapers and newscasts, this special moment in Chinese history, when students and workers both struggled for a new definition of freedom, is being ignored, even by many of the reporters who covered the event.

There are a few exceptions. Nicholas D. Kristof of the New York Times remembers Tiananmen. In a recent article called "Beijing Journal," this winner of a Pulitzer Prize for his coverage of the crackdown notes, with a degree of wonder, that while there are Chinese who will never forget the events at Tiananmen, there are many more, in the vast stretch of China outside of Beijing, for whom the rage has subsided, the propaganda has dimmed the sharpness of memory and the daily grind of life has shifted priorities from the uplifting whiff of freedom to the deadening, everyday burden of simply making ends meet.

In Beijing, this weekend, there has been extra security--and no demonstrations. A minor incident occurred last Wednesday. An American reporter was beaten by plainclothes policemen while covering a very small protest. In Hong Kong, there was a demonstration, but it was quickly surpressed. Beijing warned Hong Kong of "unhappy consequences" after the 1997 turnover of power. But nothing more. Why? Why nothing meaningful here in the United States? Why nothing there in Beijing?

In China, the one country in the world that still professes an official allegiance to Marxism-Leninism, the economy, believe it or not, is booming, and the Chinese people are not now banging their pots in a widespread demand for political change. Fat bellies don't normally spark insurrections. Official propaganda effectively focuses on the economic upheavals in Eastern Europe. The implication is clear: such chaotic deprivation is the natural result of an end to socialist rule. Some intellectuals even rationalize that in the spring of 1989 the students mindlessly backed the hardliners into an untenable corner, leaving them no choice other than to re-establish order through a brutal and continuing crackdown.

Here, in the U.S., there's barely a thought reserved for China, except for the Bush Administration's automatic efforts to extend most favored nation treatment to the Beijing regime. We're absorbed in the unpredictable miracles of American politics, we are selecting a President, and for now anyway the concerns of the rest of the world seem the stuff of fairyland, so far removed from our immediate interests. One day, though, the new President will have to deal with China. His aides may then recall the extraordinary spring of 1989, when Chinese students startled and frightened their aging leadership and, unbeknownst to

them at the time, sent an encouraging message to students in Russia, Poland and other parts of Eastern Europe by way of radio, television and fax that the age of the Communist dictator was passing from the scene and that a new age of post-Communist political possibilities was dawning. Would it be a new form of despotism? Would it be democracy?

Now, in the relative quiet of June, 1992, Kristof quotes one Chinese professor who remembers the time, three years ago, when China lurched forward towards open defiance of Communist rule, only to retreat since then into a twilight zone of political uncertainty. "The pendulum will swing back," the professor predicts optimistically. "I'm sure of it. I still believe that the Tiananmen demonstrations will go down in history as the greatest democracy movement in Chinese history."

The Americans who covered the Beijing spring of 1989 reported a great story. They functioned not as historians, or as the pamphleteers of any political movement, but rather as professional journalists. They covered the student demonstrations in Beijing in much the same way they would have covered an earthquake in California, or a political convention in Houston. Sometimes, in the excitement of deadlines and competition, using wondrous technology that obliterated time and distance, making Tiananmen as near or

far away as Washington, DC, they lacked perspective, and they made mistakes--who wouldn't?--but they had no ax to grind, and their coverage inspired many other journalists and students, stimulated second thoughts on Capitol Hill about U.S. policy toward the Beijing regime and brought a message of hope to others around the world while setting new journalistic standards for the reporting of other international crises. From the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe to the Persian Gulf War, the power of telecommunications has since been awesome. Eyes have been opened, politics has been expanded, and free and independent reporting has again proven its value.

This is a report dedicated to the journalists who covered Tiananmen. They were on the frontline of history.

INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 1989, the Joan Shorenstein Barone Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy launched a project to examine press and television coverage of a series of international crises--and the impact of that coverage on public opinion, politics and policy-making. Our object was to monitor the changing nature of media coverage of global events, explore the impact of that coverage and offer a forum for discussing lessons learned from the press-policy interaction. The first stage of our exploration spotlighted United States media coverage of the "Beijing Spring" of 1989.

During that spring, the whole world watched as Chinese students protested and stunned the government of Deng Xiaoping (once widely popular for his economic reforms and open door policy), disrupting a Sino-Soviet summit meeting, widening their efforts into a nation-wide urban mass movement that demanded major change, and ultimately encountering government violence and repression on and after the night of June 3-4.

As the political and human drama unfolded, American broadcast media brought powerful images and slogans into livingrooms and the offices of politicians and foreign policy-makers, with an immediacy unprecedented in the coverage of an international crisis. The Beijing Spring

became a universal moment as young China cried out its concerns and the American media and people around the world recognized that cry as one for freedom and democracy.

The Chinese government had done horrible things to its citizens before--in Tibet, the starvation that followed the follies of the Great Leap Forward in the late 1950s, episodes of the Cultural Revolution, in labor camps--but never before in front of a world audience. Shen Tong, one of the student leaders, in retrospect told our project: "We found a very powerful feedback from the foreign coverage to our movement...." For the first time--thanks to the media--Chinese politics had confronted the complication of world public opinion.

The United States was not involved in the events (no troops, money or even diplomatic maneuvers) and yet the power of the American media made Americans deeply involved in them. To make the American public care as much as it did about the Chinese students was itself an achievement. The story lent itself to the building of bridges between Communist China and democratic America, because the Chinese students marched, organized, and declaimed in demand of democracy (even if it wasn't exactly our kind of democracy) for their own land. The media unconsciously formed that bridge. Day by day in Tiananmen Square the reporters and camera technicians, not American diplomats, were the tangible sign to the Chinese that America cared about their

struggle for democracy. The media drove home to the old men of the Chinese government that in resisting democracy they fight an uphill struggle against the power of information across national borders.

To look back on Tiananmen is to review a story of how China nearly changed. Did the media, foreign and Chinese, help bring China to the brink of that change? Next time dissent rises to the surface, will the media be an ingredient in whether or not change will occur?

The crisis called into question much about China, and the coverage of it, too, brought to the surface the media's new role and responsibility in international affairs. Among the "firsts" in the coverage were the presence of television anchors night after night in an East Asian nation, use of new communications technology, and the scope and duration of the "live" coverage, which involved a massive influx of journalists and held Americans spellbound for more than a month. Seldom had the American press been plunged into a story so gripping, so unexpected in its twists, and so consequential for relations between two of the world's largest nations. The rule book had to be rewritten every day.

As Vito Maggioli, a producer at CNN--whose role in the path-breaking coverage was crucial--said of one high moment in the television drama, when the Chinese pulled the plug on live coverage from Tiananmen Square: "To the American

public, that was truly an extraordinary event, to sit there and watch U.S. media people literally arguing with the Chinese on the air saying, you know, finding excuses to stay on the air. That was certainly gripping television. And a historic event journalistically. The president of the United States sat there and watched it happen and then statements immediately came out from the White House."

The impact of media coverage of the Beijing Spring influenced coverage in Panama, Eastern Europe, the Persian Gulf and the former Soviet Union in a number of ways. Violence and repression had been covered before, but seldom reported live to a global audience, on all four major American television networks, over an extended period of time. Governments drew lessons from the media access to instant images in Beijing. Media used their China experiences as a basis for technical preparations and staffing for their coverage of other international events.

The volume and immediacy of the reports from China helped ensure that the coverage itself--beyond the actual events in Beijing--would become a major factor in the formulation of American public opinion and foreign policy toward China.

The American media's treatment of the crisis had a large impact on Chinese politics, Chinese society, and Chinese foreign policy as well. Referring to the coverage, the Chinese foreign minister, Qian Qichen, said

Sino-American relations were shaken because of U.S. sanctions imposed as a result of "distorted news reports and lies" about the events at Tiananmen Square. A different Chinese view came from young journalist Yeng Louqi, who told this project: "The Western media deserves real credit.... It brought Tiananmen to the entire world, and Tiananmen was a foreplay of the changes that later occurred in the Communist countries."

The "China-type" crisis coverage has proved not to be an anomaly, but rather a significant new pattern for American media. Tiananmen sensitized the media to its growing power and threw up challenges that will take years to meet fully. "It was after the Tiananmen Square that we really redefined how we do television," Susan Zirinsky summed up. "Berlin Wall falling live on television; bombs over Baghdad, live; scud missiles in Israel, live.... It is a new universe. And this brings questions.... Do we risk lives? Are we risking national security? How are we influencing policy?"

Most of the reporters who covered the China story, and the executives of the news organizations they worked for, took a justifiable pride in the jobs they did and received praise in many quarters for accuracy, depth, and completeness. A Pulitzer Prize and other awards lauded the China coverage. And the United States media's coverage provided inspiration for Chinese journalists. Said Wang

Yuguang, a Chinese journalist who worked for ABC during the crisis: "I served five years as a journalist in the national newsroom of China Daily. And in comparison, this [American media performance] is really an upbeat, uplifting experience."

The quality of the media effort stemmed from a stable of journalists with better background to cover China than in any previous era; an open-mindedness toward Chinese complexities that contrasted both with the simple-minded anti-Communist starting point of the 1950s and 1960s, and equally with the starry-eyed awe that marked some coverage of China in the early 1970s; and from a spirit that reflected the enthusiasm and vision of the American idealist tradition in approaching East Asia.

Understandably, but in the end not defensibly, many journalists involved in the coverage resist any attempt to criticize it. Susan Zirinsky of CBS said, "I apologize for nothing. I say that with a clear conscience. Television inspired the world. It was a weapon against ignorance, intolerance and indifference. Reporters of all the networks...demonstrated the medium's extraordinary power to make students, who live on the other side of the planet, just as human, just as vulnerable as the boy on the next block. The miracle of television was that the tragedy at Tiananmen Square would not have been any more vivid had it been in Times Square."

However some media critics, China scholars and officials of both the Chinese and American governments criticized some aspects of the coverage, and maintained that distortions caused by the media prism had an unnaturally disruptive impact on public opinion and policy-making in both countries. Complaints included the following: that American news organizations failed to provide advance warnings of the anti-government movement; showed emotional bias in painting a too-absolute picture of good students against an evil government; exaggerated the democratic and anti-Communist goals of the protesters; overlooked the fact that street politics are not likely to overthrow a Communist regime unless an opposition group exists and is ready to move into the halls of government; ignored the rural aspects of the uprising; did not cover as early as it should have the underlying power struggle between political factions in the Chinese Communist Party; provided insufficient warning of the repression that eventually came; and gave an inaccurate account of the violence during the night of June 3-4.

It was the combination of unprecedented coverage, stunning impact, and differences of opinion over its quality and effect that prompted the Shorenstein Barone Center to embark on this study. The Center's function is to analyze the role of the media, as democracy evolves and the world

shrinks, and to assist the press and policy-makers in finding the best ways to protect the public interest.

Our aim has been to help sort out the record, evaluate press performance (without pretending we could have done a better job--we could not have, we are not journalists) and offer suggestions for future United States media coverage of such critical international events. Among the questions considered were: Why was the China story approached as it was? Was anything missing from the articles and pictures that could have provided greater accuracy and understanding? Why was this source tapped rather than that? Did technology take over the story? If the public occasionally was misinformed, was this simply out of the press's eagerness to fully inform, or for a less praiseworthy reason? Was the public demanding such massive coverage; did the competition spur it; or did the story simply grow like a vine in the tropics and make its own space?

Over and above evaluation there is the issue of <u>how</u> the media pulled off the powerful role it did in the Beijing Spring, and the lessons in that effort for the future relationship among the press, public opinion, and foreign policy-making. So we probed the deployment of personnel, the use of evolving technologies, the nature of the varying roles of bureau chief, editor, "parachutist," visit journalist, anchor person, and producer. We took into

account the high expectations of the Chinese students of what the American media could and would do.

This is a report which raises as many questions as it resolves. The final truth about the Beijing Spring and its terrible denouement is not yet established, and may never be. Nor is the Sino-American relationship a static phenomenon, but rather a constantly evolving and perhaps very resilient one.

The report points beyond the case of the China crisis to the constantly growing and changing role of the press in the public life of our time. What can we learn about the different roles of camera, tape recorder, and notebook? We ask a question that Walter Goodman of the New York Times posed in a different context (that of the Kurds): "Should American policy be driven by scenes that happen to be accessible to cameras and that make the most impact on the screen?" The China event produced a spiral of press/politics of a kind which should be understood better than it is.

If there is a certain presumption in the Joan Shorenstein Barone Center's seeking to evaluate the performance of the highly professional journalistic force which covered the China crisis, we hope to justify that presumption by offering an objective study of issues which the working press and policy-makers have not had the time or distance to evaluate on their own.

Scope:

The aim was to review a variety of media organizations whose coverage of the events in China had the most impact on large segments of the American population, and upon the elites involved in the U.S. political and policy decisions that stemmed from those events. We reviewed the output of eight of these: the television news of the American Broadcasting Company, Columbia Broadcasting System, and Cable News Network; the print coverage of the Los Angeles Times, the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Associated Press, and Time magazine. Allowing for the fact that no sample can represent the whole, it is only the output of these eight news organizations to which we refer when we comment on United States media coverage of the events in China (it would have been useful to have included a non-American media organization in order to isolate the cultural component in United States media performance and the exact relation of press to public policy, but this was beyond the Center's resources).

We chose CNN because of its key role as a source of live coverage to the grass-roots public, policy-makers, and editors of other news organizations; CBS because it dispatched its anchor to Beijing at the height of the crisis; and ABC because it offered the added dimension of a body of reflective and background coverage through its "Nightline" program.

Among newspapers, we selected the New York Times and the Washington Post in part because of their impact on policy-makers. The Los Angeles Times offered geographical balance, a different deadline schedule, and the added dimension of its role as a provider of copy for a major wire service used widely by other newspapers across the United States.

The Associated Press and Time magazine were logical choices because of their market dominance, which translates into maximum impact, direct or indirect, on the American audience. It should be borne in mind that the Associated Press, Time, and the supplementary wire services run by our three newspapers together reach the majority of the American reading audience.

The period of time chosen for the study was April 15, 1989, the day the first student activities began, through June 30, 1989, an arbitrary end-of-month cutoff, almost a month after the military crackdown stunned the world.

Because we focused on impact on American audiences, we used the final editions of the three newspapers (plus the Los Angeles Times afternoon replate), the domestic edition of Time magazine, and the Associated Press domestic "A" wire.* We looked at all China-related materials, including

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*The AP copy in our study included, for the most part, only what was preserved in the AP's own computer database from the 1989 period. That was limited to the final version of the main China story and final versions of sidebars in each of the two cycles (AMs and PMs) each day.

opinion pieces, letters to the editor, and stories in other sections of the newspapers and magazine (such as arts and business) that dealt with China.

We viewed and logged all evening news shows of CBS and ABC, plus the CNN "Prime News" shows (through June 15), which are aired at 8 p.m. on the East Coast.** We also viewed all "Nightline" and prime time "specials" by the networks (including some of the special reports that intruded into regular network programming with news of emergency situations). We did not include the morning news shows on ABC and CBS, nor the Sunday "talk" shows.

By any measure, the scope of the American television and print coverage of the China crisis was immense, equal in volume to that accorded a United States national political convention or a NASA moon shot. By one measure, the evening news shows of the three major networks (ABC, CBS and NBC) totalled five hundred seventy-seven China stories in the first six months of 1989, by comparison with forty-four

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We asked AP to provide us with its full coverage for June 3, 4 and 5 (including bulletins and advisories). This was done, though it was difficult, time-consuming and costly for AP to generate the material.

We were unable to consider including radio coverage--National Public Radio in particular--because there was no viable access to NPR news material in such bulk.

**Because of its 24-hour format, CNN presents a problem of sheer volume for the potential archivist. One archive, the Media Research Center in Arlington, Va., tapes the "Prime News" shows but has limited capacity to cross-index and disseminate selected spots. The Vanderbilt Archive coverage of CNN is similarly limited.

stories in all of 1988. There were three hundred ninety-seven stories on these shows in the month between May 14 and June 14, 1989, by comparison with three hundred forty-four stories in the ten years (1972-1981) before China was opened to American television coverage. The total air time for those six months was 6 hours 45 minutes on CBS, 6 hours 25 minutes on NBC, and 5 hours 16 minutes on ABC.[1]

Another survey showed that over the two months between April 18 and June 18, 1989, the evening news shows of these three networks averaged five minutes and fifty seconds per night on China coverage, or 23 percent of all news broadcast. China led the news shows more than half the time in that span. CBS ran 5 hours and 17 minutes total, NBC 5 hours and 11 minutes, and ABC 4 hours and 15 minutes.[2]

Our own calculations showed that during the period of our study, from April 15 to June 30, CBS ran 6 hours and 8 minutes of China stories on the evening news shows, NBC ran 5 hours and 52 minutes, and ABC ran 5 hours and 10 minutes.

We have not tabulated the space allocated to China in the print media, but the story commanded one or more full pages in the three newspapers we surveyed on most days of the month between May 15 and June 15, 1989. It remained on the front page throughout that period, usually as the lead story. A similar volume of coverage was offered by Time and the Associated Press. In print media, however, the

proportion of total non-advertising space (known as the "news hole") devoted to China was far less than was the case for television news. The scope of the coverage was all the more significant because it was a story in which the United States was not directly involved, unlike the Iran hostage crisis or a NASA moon shot.

We assumed from the start that it would not be sufficient to study what had been written or aired at the time. So we interviewed some seventy media practitioners--reporters, editors, producers--responsible for the China coverage, China specialists, media specialists, government officials and observers of the processes of public opinion, politics and policy-making. We wished to find out what we could about the decisions made in supervising and covering the story, who made them, and why they were made. We wished to look at the nature of the expertise the reporters had, what methods were used, how reporters found and dealt with their sources, how technology influenced the coverage, the constraints on the press, and other questions that could only be answered through interviews. We also relied on interviews for information on the impact of media on politics and policy. The interviews we conducted included discussions with both field and home office representatives from all eight of the news organizations in the sample (see Appendix A for alphabetical listing).

In addition to the interviews, a workshop and public forum were held at the Center during which the eight media in the sample reacted to a draft of this report, together with sinologists, Chinese involved in the democracy movement or its coverage, and other press practitioners and theorists. In this report, the quotation of an oral source refers either to one of the interviews or to a contribution at the Workshop or Forum.

Process:

The concept for this project was initiated by Marvin Kalb, Director of the Shorenstein Barone Center, and preliminary planning and discussion went on through the fall of 1989 and the first two months of 1990. The Center's inquiry began formally in March of 1990 with the gathering of the media output from libraries and archives. An Advisory Board composed of academic specialists on China (both American and Chinese), media specialists and media practitioners was convened in April.* The Board members helped to define the scope of the media output to be

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*Those invited to Board meetings and consulted regularly were Akira Iriye, Roderick MacFarquhar, Ernest May, Dwight Perkins, Eugene Wu and Huang Yasheng of Harvard University, Harry Harding of the Brookings Institution, Merle Goldman and James Thomson of Boston University, Chinese journalist Wu Guogang, Voice of America correspondent Mark Hopkins, author Ross Terrill, journalist and author Stanley Karnow, and Marvin Kalb, Ellen Hume, Michael J. Berlin and Linda Jakobson from the Joan Shorenstein Barone Center.

covered, the issues that should be examined, and the organization of the work.

Between April and June the media output was read and viewed. Interviews and round-table discussions with media practitioners, government officials and China specialists, including all Advisory Board members, were completed by August in Hong Kong, Beijing, Boston, New York and Washington.

Rather than take a wholly quantitative approach to our content analysis of the media output, and risk losing the spirit of the coverage in a measurement of minutiae, we looked for patterns, underlying assumptions, omissions, and individual examples of journalistic excellence which might serve as desirable norms. We focused on those aspects of the coverage that were seen as crucial to the policy process or the understanding of the protest movement. We analyzed and compared the treatment of these focal points by the media in our sample. In selected instances, we did use quantity to help measure performance. We focused as well on the use of language.

An initial draft of the report was completed in August 1990 by Michael J. Berlin, its research director, with contributions from Akira Iriye, Amy Zegart (who conducted a number of the interviews) and Benjamin Huang. Jonathan Moses, Linda Jakobson, Deborah Ullrich and Zhiqiang Wang also contributed to the project. Essential administrative

and proofreading services were provided by Joy Gragg, Edie Holway, Brenda Laribee, Nancy Palmer, and Justin Suran of the Center staff. The report was revised by Ross Terrill, in consultation with Professor Berlin, Ellen Hume, and Marvin Kalb, to incorporate comments and suggestions from the Advisory Board as well as some of those interviewed and cited in these pages. Finally in the winter of 1991-1992, after the Workshop and Forum, parts of the report were again rewritten by Ross Terrill and Ellen Hume, and edited by Marvin Kalb.

A LEGACY OF AMERICAN PERCEPTIONS OF CHINA

How one culture comprehends another is one of the most fascinating questions in modern history. All ideas and images are "cultural productions" in that external events must be filtered through certain conceptual frameworks and reproduced in some comprehensible vocabulary. In looking at another society--its people, history, current affairs--one is, therefore, also trying to understand it in terms familiar to oneself.

Since the late eighteenth century when Yankee clipper ships began visiting Canton, Americans have been trying to understand China. The Chinese, for their part, have watched developments in the United States with intense interest since the 1840s. An intriguing question suggests itself: do the two peoples today have a better understanding of one another than in the past? Is their mutual knowledge cumulative, or does each generation develop its own view of the world? Do most mutual images persist over time, or do new perceptions emerge from time to time?

Journalists have been the principal providers of information about China for the outside world. At the beginning, to be sure, that role was mostly assumed by missionaries and merchants who wrote home stories about their encounters with Chinese. Although there were a few American newspaper correspondents here and there in Asia in

the nineteenth century, they were outnumbered by European journalists who provided the bulk of information on Chinese affairs until around the turn of the century. From then on, however, an increasing number of American writers visited China and often stayed for many years, soon coming to distinguish themselves as among the foremost reporters on that country.

People like Thomas F. Millard and John B. Powell in the first three decades of the century, followed by Edgar Snow, Harold Isaacs, Agnes Smedley, Arch Steele, Theodore White and many others in the 1930s and the 1940s, were the main sources of information Americans had about China in those tumultuous decades. This mode of communication was abruptly severed when the Communists seized power in Beijing and the two countries fought a fierce war in Korea shortly thereafter. No direct media coverage of China was possible, and with the exception of Snow, virtually no American correspondent visited China for nearly two decades, until 1971 when close contacts began again between Beijing and Washington.

The American journalists who went to China in the 1970s were, therefore, separated from their predecessors by two decades of non-intercourse between the two countries. Most of them represented the younger generation, products of postwar education and training, whose prior knowledge of China was derived from books and other indirect sources of

information. This did not make them less prepared to report on China than the earlier generation of reporters; indeed those stationed in Beijing from the late 1970s in general knew the Chinese language better than the pioneers. At the same time, however, they could not count on the kind of support system the latter had enjoyed, namely a well established foreign community in China and a large number of Chinese contacts free to speak their minds, those who used to serve as middlemen between foreigners and the native population.

The pioneering journalists were products of what may be termed the American reformist tradition. "Americans inherited from the missionaries," said the veteran journalist Stanley Karnow, "the belief that the Chinese were perfectible." Most of the prewar American writers on China came out of a political culture that was liberal, democratic and idealistic. It was no accident, then, that their reports out of China emphasized developments in that country that resonated with these themes. Taken collectively, the China they depicted was outwardly underdeveloped and even backward but not without genuine strivings for change. And change meant a growing alignment with forces elsewhere in the world--above all in the United States--that were pushing humanity to a better realization of itself. At bottom it was a progressive view of history that went back to the Enlightenment but that also incorporated the American

Progressivism of the Wilsonian age. In such a framework one looked for signs of change and for evidence that various countries of the world were coming together in an increasingly interdependent international community.

China was taken as a prime example of the Progressive faith. More than Japan or other Asian countries, perhaps even more than the advanced nations of Europe, the Chinese appeared to be susceptible to American reform attempts. This was in part because the Chinese seemed to need American support, but it was also because Americans needed success in China to reassure themselves of the vitality of their national mission. The fate of the two countries appeared to grow more and more intertwined as decades went on, so that this faith in Chinese-American interdependence and approximation reached a climax during the Second World War because it was believed that the bilateral relationship was but one aspect of the worldwide struggle against tyranny and poverty, a struggle in which democracy and justice would ultimately triumph.

Just as frequently, however, these hopes would be dashed by events in China that did not conform to the visions entertained by Americans. Earlier in the century, provincial warlords appeared to stand in the way of the New China movement aimed at democratizing the country. During the Second World War news about corruption and inefficiency on the part of the Nationalist authorities disillusioned

Americans who had looked to them as the new instrument for reform. And after the Nationalists were in turn replaced by the Communists, even those Americans who had pinned their hopes on the latter had difficulty fitting Communist dogmas and practices into their reformist conceptions. The resulting sense of disillusionment and disappointment was all the greater because of the very depth of the Progressive faith. Often such disappointment would lead to a reassessment of the Chinese condition, producing a post mortem that combined an image of China's traditional backwardness with an optimism that despite temporary setbacks, reform and change would eventually resume.

One can see, then, that prior to the Deng Xiaoping era that began in the late 1970s, there existed a rich legacy of American reporting on China with certain enduring themes. One of them was the dichotomy between the despotic state and political reform. The starting point was the image of an authoritarian state, going back to the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-221 A.D.) and even beyond, which had been in place for centuries. The state, in such a perception, was characterized by a centralized bureaucracy and the emperor's autocratic rule which established a superstructure over a people with no direct role to play in the system. The picture was one in which the state predated the nation in the sense that there was a Chinese state long before there was Chinese national consciousness. The mass of people, in

such an image, were apathetic, parochial and oppressed. When some of them did decide to challenge authority, the only means for rectifying the status quo was through an uprising. Thus political changes would only take the form of dynastic cycles, namely uprisings against the established authority, with successful rebels establishing themselves as the next rulers. But that did not change anything fundamentally, and so Chinese history could be represented as a series of political events without a constructive impact on the ways in which the mass of people lived.

At the same time, however, the Progressive faith mandated that one did not condemn China to eternal sameness. Change was bound to come about, but since it could not be generated by the despotic state system itself, it had to be brought about through some agents of reform, whether indigenous or foreign, which would propose alternative visions and seek to move the country out of its traditional ways. They would do so by arousing political consciousness among those hitherto deprived of power and by promising them moral and material support from the outside.

How the two images (the traditional state and the new consciousness) were related in such a formulation was not always clear, but the existence of these images in American writings on China since the late nineteenth century suggests a reformist agenda which in turn reflected a conception of history that was progressive and optimistic. There could

not be any progress without backwardness. The traditional Chinese state system was seen as an epitome of the latter, but for that very reason reform possibilities in China appeared all the more exciting.

The key role of intellectuals in bringing about change in China is another enduring theme in American writings. Traditionally, it was assumed that, since the state was helplessly conservative, intellectuals in China had to be counted on as potential agents for change, for they, by definition, were more likely to be in touch with, and be aware of, alternative visions. They were guardians of traditional civilization, but this meant two things: they would transmit the given culture from generation to generation, but at the same time they would seek to prevent its decay from within. Generations of American observers had noted that this latter legacy was as important as the former, and that from time to time in Chinese history the literati would become quite outspoken against what they considered to be the corrupting influences of power at the expense of traditional verities. In modern times, as an increasing number of foreigners arrived to report on conditions in the country, it was not surprising that it was the intellectuals who impressed them as the most promising force against the established order.

Western observers had become aware of this reformist tradition in China since the mid-nineteenth century, but it

was toward the end of the century that they gained a sense of the strength of the tradition. By then some reformers and radicals were seeking out foreigners to communicate their views, and there developed a symbiotic relationship between domestic reformers and foreign correspondents. Not that all foreign journalists fell in with China's anti-establishment intellectuals. Many observers stayed close to the seat of power and saw things from the government's perspective. But as the central authority weakened and reformist movements grew, especially after the Boxer Rebellion fiasco in 1900, it was easy even for a casual observer to note that important developments were taking place in China through the initiative of intellectuals--senior scholars and young students alike--who were eager to change the country, to reform the state in order to create a modern nation.

One could term this phenomenon nationalism, though what the reformers proposed was to go beyond ethnic nationalism and reconstitute the country in such a way as to make it comparable to the modern nations of Europe, America, or Japan. They turned in all directions for inspiration and guidance and succeeded in impressing foreigners with the genuineness of their commitment. They may have conveyed an exaggerated notion of their strength. In reality, the reformers, whether of the late Qing dynasty variety (before the First World War) or of the New Youth generation (during

and after the war), proved to be numerically insignificant and were no match for the court officials and provincial warlords who controlled military power. Still, it was through them that foreigners became aware of the newly aroused Chinese nationalism.

Of all foreign observers in China, American journalists were perhaps the most explicitly in sympathy with this nationalism, and so it is not surprising that their writings should have stressed the role of Chinese intellectuals as reformers. This was a reflection, in part, of the increasing number of Chinese students who came to study in the United States and of the equally significant number of private secondary schools and universities in China founded with American missionary support. Graduates of these schools as well as "returned students" constituted the core of China's intellectuals during the interwar period, the time when the influence of American journalists reporting on that country reached an unprecedented height. Writers like Millard and Powell identified with the intellectuals--students, college teachers, journalists--and conveyed this strata's perspectives on Chinese affairs to the outside world.

Even those, such as Edgar Snow and Agnes Smedley, whose reports focused on a particular group of Chinese reformers--Communists--should be seen as part of this phenomenon. They, after all, interviewed, lived with and reported on the

Chinese Communist leaders who were relatively educated and articulate and who were fully aware of the role of sympathetic foreign reporters in gaining them support at home and overseas. The Chinese Communist movement was portrayed in their writings as a reformist undertaking carried out by well-informed men and women. That they were committed Communists appeared less significant than that they fitted into the traditional pattern of enlightened leaders proposing an alternative to a corrupt regime.

Chinese history also abounded in instances, however, when a successful revolt by reformers would develop into another authoritarian regime. The erstwhile reformers would now be the power-holders and they would try to perpetuate themselves in positions of authority by using the same means of dictatorship and oppression practiced by those they had replaced. This pattern of political change meant that reform movements might not entirely succeed in reforming the country. The more things changed, the more they might remain the same. An upswing in a reformist agenda would be most encouraging, but there was no assurance that it would continue for long. Not only would those in power seek to suppress it, but even if it should succeed it might transform itself into a new repressive status quo, recreating the arrangement it had presumably fought to overthrow.

Western reports on China over the decades were filled with references to such a pattern of events. There were frequent and quick ups and downs as hopes about change in China were raised and dashed. Optimistic accounts of change would be followed by extremely pessimistic descriptions, or images about an unchanging China might be replaced, almost inexplicably, by a vision of a new China. Stanley Karnow recalled the dual attitude of Henry Luce. "He would reject any suggestion that Mao and the Communists were succeeding," Karnow said of his one-time employer, "with the argument that Communists can't succeed. And with the same passion, he would reject any argument or any suggestion that China was failing with the argument that Chinese can't fail. This kind of schizophrenia helped me in a way as a reporter," Karnow went on, "[and prevented too much intrusion] into my reporting, because I could attribute progress to the Chinese and attribute setbacks to the Communists."

New and old, in many of the journalistic writings, became terms that merely hid an essentially static situation: there was constant motion but at the core nothing really changed. We find instances of this in the literature of pessimism that followed optimistic accounts of the May Fourth movement ("China, the pity of it"), hopeful reports on the Communists that contradicted pictures of China in disarray under the Nationalist leadership in the late 1930s, and the negative portrayals of the Communist

regime when it undertook measures to suppress freedom and truth during the Anti-Rightist campaign (1957) and the Great Leap Forward (1958-59). All these twists and turns fitted into an overall image of a society that somehow refused to transform itself even as segments of it were constantly rising against the state.

Although it is difficult to generalize, it may well be that such an image of China was particularly widespread among American reporters because of their eagerness to find evidence of change in that country. Given the American reformist impulse, signs of innovation and renovation in China merited special attention, but by the same token the sense of disappointment was all the greater when hopes for Chinese transformation proved premature. When this happened, one could find refuge in a perception of China in which upturns and downturns were common occurrences without, however, making a lasting impact on society.

Such a fatalistic perception would, of course, conflict with the underlying optimism of American reformism. The former essentially represents a cyclical view of history, whereas the latter assumes a progressive construction of history. There is a tension between the two, and it may well be that this tension has fascinated and challenged the best of the American journalists reporting from and on China. Did things get better, however slightly, following internal turmoil? Or did the country remain essentially the

same? Even if the society should undergo change through contact with the outside world, or through domestic pressures, would this mean the power structure or the state would likewise change? Or were societal changes not sufficient to alter the nature of the state? When elsewhere in the world transformation was taking place, could China remain unaffected, or would it become part of the global transformation? These are fascinating questions that bring us up to 1989 and beyond, and they ultimately concern the relationship between universalism and particularism--a very "American" issue.

The key question, of course, was what "change" meant in the China of 1989. The journalists of our time may have differed from the old-timers in their predisposition toward change. Less idealistic, less inclined to the crusading adventures of a Snow or a Smedley, they perhaps saw change basically as news, and were less inclined to ask whether the change was good or bad, permanent or temporary--less impressed with the probability of an upward course from darkness toward light. They would say--they did say to us in the interviews and workshop conducted for this study--that they followed the story and went where it took them, and nowhere else. At the same time, an identification occurred between the Chinese students of 1989 and the American media that suggests the American reformist tradition in approaching China may not be dead. It seems to

have lived, at least, in the hope placed in it from the Chinese side.

Were the journalists of 1989 in the reformist tradition? Or were they a new breed, as indeed the Chinese students of 1989 were not only in a rich intellectual tradition, but in some ways a new phenomenon? The cycle of optimism and pessimism, hopes rising and hopes dashed, seems to exist not only within American perceptions, but within the fabric of Chinese history itself. And yet no cycle is merely a repetition of a previous one; in the spring of 1989 there were displayed new themes along with old, as well as startling new dimensions of the media's role and new media technologies.

COVERAGE OF THE CRISIS

1. THE DEATH OF HU YAOBANG

When Hu Yaobang, a pro-reform member of the Politburo, died in Beijing on April 15, 1989, pent-up forces burst into public view on many campuses. In early 1987, Hu had been forced to resign as Party Secretary and heir apparent to senior leader Deng Xiaoping. The proximate cause of his ouster was a brief series of student demonstrations in December 1986 calling for political reforms.

The American media we studied recognized the newsworthiness of the 1989 protest demonstrations from the very beginning, as students began to plaster their campuses with pro-Hu xiaozibao (small-character posters), later moved out into the streets on marches that won open support from the citizens of Beijing, and finally settled into Tiananmen Square and remained there in defiance of the military. Indeed many of the resident reporters, who knew Chinese politics and the Chinese language better than the visiting journalists in the early 1970s when U.S. ties with the PRC began, had been waiting for renewed manifestations of student unrest for the two years since Hu's fall.

Upon Hu's death, the Washington Post story by Daniel Southerland on April 16 noted the posters and their "political tone" and presciently added: "The death of Hu

could provide a spark for more wall poster protests and possibly demonstrations by students, who have been under pressure not to demonstrate in the streets for democracy."

The New York Times on April 16 ran both an obituary and an account of the political nature of the wall posters, which foreshadowed the possibility of demonstrations. In her article, Sheryl WuDunn quoted Wang Dan, a slight, earnest Beijing University history student who later became a leader of the movement, as a "student militant" who said that "perhaps this event...will be a turning point for China's reforms." In the end it was, but not as Wang Dan hoped.

Although the movement swelled with some spontaneity and to proportions expected by nobody, it had its roots in plans for a celebration of the 70th anniversary of May 4, 1919, a great moment in the history of Chinese student politics (Tiananmen Square was also its locus), which later was seen by liberals and Communists alike as a cultural watershed for an authoritarian China seeking modernity. Southerland of the Washington Post was the only reporter in our sample of eight to note that many of the students who emerged as leaders during the spring had been planning to stage protests on May 4 (a fact that was widely known to Westerners on the campuses of Beijing for many weeks before April 15).[3] And none reported that by March of 1989, the

student planners had already made contacts among universities in Beijing and between Beijing and other cities, such as Shanghai and Tianjin, and with Chinese students abroad, to coordinate continuing demonstrations anticipated for April or May. Shen Tong, a bohemian-looking biology major from Beijing University who became a leader of the movement, later said the absence of reporting on the "democracy salons" and other preparatory activities for the anniversary, was a major flaw in Tiananmen Square media coverage. This and additional media failings led him to say, "There were two Tiananmens. The one I participated in, and the one perceived by the Americans."

The students' posters, marches and sit-ins were technically illegal and had in the past subjected participants to varying levels of punishment. All media in the sample--again showing a knowledge of Chinese Communist ways that could not have been assumed in the 1970s--noted the unexpected initial tolerance by the authorities toward the demonstrations. Kathy Wilhelm reported in her Associated Press story of April 16 that protest posters put up at Beijing University were not taken down by security officials. The next day she wrote that police at Tiananmen Square made "no effort to interfere" with the first march. And on the eighteenth, Wilhelm concluded her lead on a demonstration outside the leadership compound, Zhongnanhai, just northwest of Tiananmen Square, by saying, "Police used

no force and no arrests were reported as the demonstrators left peacefully."[4]

Mention of the government's restraint was less frequent on television than in the print media, but the images generally emphasized peaceful protest, so the message was the same. A number of experienced reporters suggested the contrast with harsher government responses to dissent in the earlier, Maoist era. But the media did not yet perceive that one reason for the government restraint may have been the absence of a consensus within the leadership on how to deal with the students.

On April 18, when student marches from campuses to the Beijing city center began, television networks covered the story for the first time. ABC's Todd Carrel noted with insight that authorities had tolerated the demonstrations so far, "but if history is a guide they will crack down soon." John Sheahan of CBS made a similar point, saying that if the students pressed their protests outside Zhongnanhai, where many of China's leaders live and work, police "won't be so restrained for long." Cable News Network also noted the striking absence of violence.

"The police appeared eager to avoid a confrontation," wrote Nicholas D. Kristof in the New York Times on April 18. "Both uniformed and plainclothes police were monitoring the march and rally but did not interfere," wrote David Holley of the Los Angeles Times in a story on April 18 that ran in

the Washington Post as well. The next day Holley noted the parallel phenomenon of students' restraint when, after several hours of demonstrations outside Zhongnanhai, the police massed to push them back. "[T]he crowd made no serious attempt to sweep the soldiers aside," he said. All this was important to stress, since the low-key approach was unusual in the Chinese context.

Time magazine was of necessity a week late, due to its deadline, but caught up by questioning why the protests were allowed to continue unchecked, and wound up with this insightful look ahead: "The test will come if, when the ceremonies for Hu are past, the engine of protest should suddenly roar out of control."[5]

In the reporting on the funeral of Hu Yaobang on April 22, the tone of the entire spring's coverage was set as the media focused on the students, rather than on the government and conflicts within it. Both television and print media paid full attention to the student crowd outside the Great Hall of the People which had defied an edict closing Tiananmen Square, but made perfunctory mention of the ceremonies of the old leaders inside. Southerland in the Washington Post noted on April 23 that the eulogies seemed intended to go part of the way toward one student demand by "effectively rehabilitating" Hu, but otherwise in our sample, government thinking on the student protests was little reflected. This was unfortunate because in fact Zhao

Ziyang, who gave the funeral oration, gave high praise to Hu, and some incidents inside the Great Hall suggested tension between Hu's family and Deng.[6] These were portents of a clash building up within the Politburo.

From the very first marches in April, all eight news organizations in our survey reminded readers and viewers that the use of force was possible and conveyed the ominous significance, in the Chinese context, of government threats and intimidation short of physical violence. Holley explained with prescience in the Los Angeles Times on April 18 that plainclothes officers who observed the rallies and marches, "many of whom make no real attempt to hide their identity, play the role of reminding all present that they may be held responsible for their words or actions. Activist students, for example, may later be criticized in private by school officials, or they may experience difficulties in winning good job assignments after graduation." On the same day, the AP's Wilhelm quoted one student's reminder that "getting arrested in China is not like getting arrested in America.... Here your whole life is ruined." In later weeks it would sometimes seem that the media set to one side the possibility of violence, but in the first week the traditional penalty for dissent in the People's Republic was made clear.

This initial period from mid-April produced some of the most enterprising and insightful reporting of the entire

Beijing Spring--in part because the reporters still had energy to go out and find the extra detail or source, and in part because the pace of events and the size of the canvas had not yet become overwhelming.

2. FROM MOURNING TO PROTEST

In the days after Hu Yaobang's death, American journalists kept track of the actions of the students and the growing public support they attracted. The first physical violence came on April 20, when police beat some students outside the leadership compound, Zhongnanhai, but it was not extensive and the media did not make a center-piece of it. ABC called it a "scuffle." Greater violence occurred on April 21-22 in the cities of Xian and Changsha, but no foreign journalists were there to report it.

ABC and CBS simply offered the official New China (Xinhua) News Agency version of the Xian and Changsha incidents, with no attribution and no qualifiers. Several days later they added footage taken by tourists. No news organization pointed to the evidence of Chinese government bias in previous Xinhua news coverage of the Beijing protests. The Associated Press and the Los Angeles Times--but none of the other six outlets--enterprisingly tried to verify the story in Xian and Changsha by contacting

foreigners in the two cities. It was the first sign of a shortcoming of the coverage of the entire spring--stories outside Beijing were slighted.

Reporters based in Beijing cannot travel to other cities in China without permission and planning, which limits their capacity to respond to breaking news events outside the capital. But the many reporters who were in China on tourist visas were free to travel to the provinces and it is a pity that few did so.

ABC balanced footage of the Xian riots and the harsh response by Xian authorities, which resulted in some deaths, by noting that in Beijing "police have been restrained so far."[7] Most of our sample were thoughtful about the apparent government restraint in the capital. Reporting on the first week's events, Time magazine noted that "the police did not crack down until early Thursday morning," and then asked "why the authoritarian leadership permitted it to get started." Time offered several reasons--the reluctance to crack down before the upcoming Gorbachev summit, a factional plot, the need to retain international good will, and the fact that Deng Xiaoping "can afford to allow university students to let off steam occasionally."[8]

Kristof, also surprised by government permissiveness, suggested in the New York Times on April 21 that it related to the students' special status in Chinese society. Southerland reported in the Post the same day that "police

apparently had been under instructions to avoid provoking more radical actions by students." Jim Abrams of the Associated Press wrote on April 20 that China had become "a more open and slightly more tolerant society," as well as one that was "more conscious of public and international opinion." These explanations were valid, yet maneuvering within the government, of which little was yet known or reported, was probably an even more important factor.

3. THE MOVEMENT'S AIMS

A number of journalists, sinologists and American government officials we interviewed criticized United States media for giving viewers and readers the false impression that protesters in Beijing desired an American-style democratic system. "I believe we tried to put a 'made in the U.S.A.' democracy stamp on it," said Jackie Judd of ABC.

There is no doubt that Western ideas influenced the 1989 movement, and the media gave concrete evidence of this. The media--six of the eight in our sample--reported Chinese students quoting famous Americans. In television, the most often used was Abraham Lincoln's quote that a government should be "of the people, by the people and for the people." Lincoln's Gettysburg address, cited by Chinese students, also made the pages of all three daily newspapers. A 23-year-old Chinese engineering student, quoted in the

Washington Post, echoed Patrick Henry: "As the saying goes in the United States, 'Give me liberty or give me death.' That is our motto here." On May 2, one Chinese student recited part of the Declaration of Independence to ABC's Carrel: "We hold these truths to be self-evident. That all men is [sic] created equal."

Shen Tong, the Beijing University student leader, said retrospectively that the motivations for some of the student demands included a desire to replicate, in the Chinese context, certain Western democratic mechanisms--such as a free press, seen by student theorists as the means to check Party authority.

An international flavor existed in the student movement and naturally television cameras and still photographers caught and lingered on banners and T-shirts with slogans in English such as "Give me liberty or give me death!" and "We Shall Overcome." The student placards showed the Statue of Liberty (a small model was carried and photographed extensively during demonstrations in Shanghai). The students adopted the two-fingered V-for-victory sign which they had seen on Chinese television reports on the "people power" movement from the Philippines.

Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of banners, T-shirts and symbols were in Chinese and reflected Chinese cultural and political norms, rather than Western ideas. There was a tendency for the press to be most in contact

with students who spoke some English, and journalists should have pointed out from time to time the bias this involuntary selection introduced into reports on the degree of Western content in the ideas of the movement. Television, selecting the appealing and the readily-communicable American symbols, should have candidly pointed out that these were not fully representative.

According to our perusal of statements, posters, and speeches made at the time, the students said they wanted change in four main areas: 1) Better treatment for intellectuals, including more money for education, better salaries and job assignments after graduation. 2) An end to official corruption, which had become pervasive under the dual pricing system, and to preferential treatment given relatives of Party officials in getting lucrative jobs and better basic living arrangements (housing, ration coupons, foreign goods, college placement). 3) Political reform, building on some of Hu Yaobang's ideas, which meant, for the most part, more government accountability and responsiveness to citizens' ideas and opinions, including broader grass-roots input into government policy. 4) Respect for personal freedoms (which are guaranteed on paper by the Chinese constitution) such as freedom to demonstrate, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press.

Print media in particular made careful and detailed listings of student concerns from the opening

demonstrations. Los Angeles Times correspondent Holley, for example, on April 18 gave not only a list of some of the demands, but also an account of how they were presented. "In the pre-dawn today, a young man who helped hang the banner on the monument shouted out a list of student demands: that the government re-evaluate Hu and give him proper credit for his accomplishments, that the government apologize for mistakes made in the course of reforms, that unspecified government leaders resign and that Chinese citizens be allowed democracy and freedom. Members of the crowd shouted out support and added demands for freedom of speech and press." Holley then continued by detailing the rapidly revised list of demands. "Around sunrise...[students pressed] a revised list of demands: public disclosure of income of national leaders, a formal rejection of the two major anti-liberal political campaigns of the 1980s and rehabilitation of their victims, increased funding for education, abolition of restrictions on marches, plus freedom of speech and press--and the original demand for a reassessment of Hu."

There were noticeable differences among the various television networks' treatments of student demands on April 18. Carrel, ABC's Beijing correspondent, who had studied in China and speaks Chinese, explained that students were "calling on leaders to reform themselves and become more accountable to the people," as well as for "a cleaner

government, more democracy and more money and respect for intellectuals." CBS's Sheahan, who had come to China with no particular Chinese background, referred with less precision to students "demanding, among other things, freedom of speech and freedom of the press."

Despite the wide-ranging changes that students and others demanded, all eight media organizations in our sample tended to define the entire movement by just one of its goals--generally as a "democracy" or "pro-democracy" movement. All three dailies extensively used terms like "pro-democracy," "demonstrations for democracy," "democracy campaign" and "demands for democracy." Evening news lead-ins (the spoken introductions that precede a taped segment from a correspondent) on both CBS and ABC also identified the movement, its participants and its demands with such terms.* The same was true of all but one of the news organizations in the study. The partial exception was Time magazine, which used this shorthand label sparingly.

Harry Harding of the Brookings Institution said that "to call it [a] pro-democracy [movement]" was to "overly glorify the demands." And an American government official

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*On ABC, the term "democracy" appeared on approximately 66 percent of all evening news broadcasts featuring China between April 18 and June 4. On CBS, it appeared on 41 percent of broadcasts that included stories on China. CNN Prime News tapes from April 17 until May 17 reveal that 68 percent of all broadcasts on China used the word "democracy," though it should be noted that corresponding percentages for ABC and CBS were also higher for those four weeks--72 percent and 65 percent respectively.

we interviewed for this study was skeptical that the Chinese students were democrats. "Were these genuine democratic aspirations?" he asked and went on to complain: "[The media] portrayed the demonstrations as an outbreak of Democracy, with a big D. This helped create false [public] expectations."

"I was thinking back over recent times," said Tom Kent of AP, "and I can recall the word democracy appearing on the lips of Afghan guerrillas, Ethiopian revolutionaries, Yeltsin, Kuwaiti students, Kurdish tribesman and an announcer from North Korean radio. Something here suggests that definition is necessary when the word is used and I think that's something that we will carry forward from this [China experience]."

Many journalists we interviewed in the Beijing press corps simply felt that words like "pro-democracy" or "greater democracy" were the best available terms. Said Adi Ignatius of the Wall Street Journal (outside our sample), "If you were actually going to characterize it in the early stages, you'd have to call it pro-free speech, free association, anti-corruption.... But to use a catchall like 'pro-democracy,' I don't have such a problem with that."

Former UPI Beijing correspondent Jane MaCartney said more warily, "[I]t's always so much easier to simplify and to say 'democracy,' because if you say 'accountability,' who's going to be interested? ... It doesn't have that ring

about it." Democracy and its various related descriptives highlight a significant aspect of faraway events in a way that an American audience can relate to and feel stirred by. Nevertheless, journalists must struggle within the tension between accuracy and gaining the public's attention. "The key issue is democracy compared to what," observed the sinologist James Thomson, "and the media should always try to mention that relativity."

The student movement in general was a far cry from a drive for American democracy to replace Communist rule. As reported in the Washington Post, Barbara Ranagan, an American teacher in Wuhan, asked her students in the midst of the movement, "What do you mean when you say democracy? ... Do you want to give the 80 percent of the people who are out there in the countryside the right to vote?" She received this reply: "No, they're not ready."[9] The students were not bent on replacing one political system with another political system. According to Shen Tong, in the early meetings of the Beijing University Democracy Salon and the Olympic Institute (small organizations devoted to studying political issues), discussion focused on how to change the policies of the government, not how to overthrow the government. Shen said at a presentation at Harvard University: "I had no answer to the question 'What if you succeed?'"

In the demonstrations on April 22 and April 27, protesters who cried for democracy also held banners, whether in sincerity or for tactical reasons, with slogans such as "Support the Correct Leadership of the Communist Party." All of the movement's major organizations said that they did not aim to overthrow the Communist Party, and Beijing Normal University student leader Wuer Kaixi, a charismatic education student, repeatedly expressed his desire to join the Party.

Even if the students' "support" for the Communist Party was merely tactical, the best of the media saw in April that the student democracy movement was a protest, not an incipient opposition that could soon enter the halls of government. For example, Holley of the Los Angeles Times stated in an article on April 23 that "the demonstrations cannot be considered purely anti-government, and many protesters think of themselves as a kind of loyal opposition." Holley later said that the movement "was aimed at accelerating the process of economic and political reform within the Communist Party and under the Communist Party's leadership of the Chinese system."

The media saw complex reasons behind what indeed seemed to be the reformist mentality of most of the students. Dorinda Elliott of Newsweek (outside our sample) suggested to us three reasons. 1) Bukeneng [literally meaning "not able to do"]. This was the notion that an overthrow of the

Party could not succeed. 2) Danger. Many saw the need to cloak more radical demands and ideas in patriotic garb for their own personal protection. 3) Luan [Chaos]. In the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution and in the wake of ten years of slow-moving political reforms, many students and intellectuals had lost faith in the Party, yet a pervasive view was that the Communist Party was all that stood between China and chaos.

WuDunn in the New York Times summed up the limited, perhaps inconsistent goals of the movement on April 28. "Democracy? In China, Write Morality," ran the headline. She noted how many students remained "unclear" about what they meant by "democracy," that their views "vary enormously," as did their "ability to articulate a vision of democracy." WuDunn added: "[W]hen they speak about democracy, most students think of the American system of government--even if they do not believe in wholesale importation of the American way." Yet she quoted a student as saying, "Ours must be different from the United States," and explained that he said "the three-branch American system of government is unsuitable for China...." Overall, the tone conveyed not only the questions that students were then grappling with, but the distinctions between their ideas and American ones. On April 27 on ABC, Peter Jennings aptly declared, "It is not democracy as we know it." He did not, however, go on to state the differences.

The Chinese demonstrators, who were building their movement and aims as they went along, did not make presentation of their ideas, especially the role of Western influences, an easy job for journalists. One frustration of the press was later summarized by David Schweisberg, UPI's Beijing bureau chief (outside our sample), in relating a conversation with students:

What do you want?--"We want democracy."

Well what does that mean?--"Well democracy means more freedom."

Well what do you mean by more freedom?--"Democracy."

Time magazine's Jaime FlorCruz later told us that in trying to establish the students' definition of democracy, if you "ask twelve people, you get twelve answers," which might also be the case in the United States. FlorCruz went on to say that the lack of specificity did not mean students were aimless: "At the same time, after giving you a lame kind of answer on this definition of what democracy is, they would lead you to what they really are after.... It's a show of support for the reform."

It was not a shortcoming to be laid principally at the door of the media, but it may have been an obstacle to American understanding of the unique features and limitations of the student movement, that Americans tend to see their own democratic values mirrored elsewhere in the world. ABC's Jackie Judd remarked, "Americans think others

want to be like us." Canadian reporter Jan Wong reflected, "Americans assume that Chinese goals are what American goals would be. I think they assume that they love democracy and the same kind of things." Perhaps any nation tends to see its values projected elsewhere, which both facilitates interest and sympathy and plants seeds of misunderstanding.

This study does not have any quarrel with the label "pro-democracy" for the movement, although at times the term "democracy" may have been overused. But democracy's relative meaning, and the many varieties of democratic ideas, should have received more stress. Within our sample, some news organizations provided more specific descriptions. CNN on May 4 referred to student protests as being "against what they say is government corruption and political repression." Time magazine, also minimizing philosophic labels, admirably let words like "demonstrations" and "protests" stand by themselves instead of always adding "pro-democracy" or similar generalized adjectives.

Corruption was a major factor motivating the students and generating citizen support, and all eight media organizations we sampled reported on it in one way or another. The New York Times identified corruption as a dominant factor in popular discontent as early as April 17. The Los Angeles Times eventually covered it thoroughly, and correspondent Holley wrote on April 30, "Several students stressed public anger about corruption, especially guandao--

a term that refers to the practice of some officials of obtaining goods at controlled state prices and reselling them at market prices. China's two-tier pricing system for many commodities makes this an extremely widespread and lucrative method of official profiteering."

Time magazine mentioned the importance of corruption in driving student protests in its May 1 issue (which had an April 23 deadline). William Doerner wrote that "there is widespread suspicion, valid in some cases, of rampant corruption among top leaders and their children, including the embezzlement of hard currency to establish bank accounts abroad."

Seven of the media organizations also cited corruption as a major factor compelling workers and other sectors of society to support the students and join the protests. Corruption, however, was sometimes a symptom of a more fundamental cause for unrest. Many students and others believed the Party had lost the moral authority to rule, and its ruling ideology, Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, had lost its meaning.

All the media in our sample mentioned popular disillusionment with the Party--mostly as an effect of the Cultural Revolution. However, only the Los Angeles Times and the New York Times explored the pervasive ideological drift in Chinese society--and they did so more than a month after the protests began.

CBS dealt effectively with the personal frustrations of students in a feature (much later on) by Bruce Morton. Morton began his May 15 piece by showing a student marching in a rally, then asked him in an interview if he thought the movement would have an effect and make the government better. After the student answered "yes," Morton remarked, "But better how?" and continued, "What do they want? They want some changes in their own lives first." The viewer then saw pictures of living conditions in a Beijing University dormitory, as Morton narrated: "[One student] shares this narrow room with five other students in double-decker bunks. One table, rice bowls, clothes, laundry and garbage in the hallway, which smells of urine." Morton went on to interview a chemistry major about the overly rigid job placement system (she cannot change her major and as a result, he said, "She may spend her working life assigned to a job she doesn't like"). Then he discussed the lack of respect for intellectuals in contemporary Chinese society. Said one student, "The most important thing is to tell the society to pay attention to education." In this one part of his piece, Morton managed to bring to life important and widespread personal motives underlying the student demonstrations--a desire for better living conditions, a more flexible job assignment system, better status and pay for intellectuals, and more respect in

society for knowledge. Here was television that not only showed pictures but brought understanding.

To what extent did the students see Taiwan as a model for their aspirations? Many Taiwanese singers have been popular in China, including Hou Dejian, who joined the movement. Is it possible that the lyrics of popular songs influenced the movement, in the same way that rock music helped provide the rallying cry for American students of the '60s? The media in our sample did not broach these questions, though an article by Kristof in the New York Times on May 4 touched on China's envy of Taiwan. During a conference at Brandeis University in October, 1989, exiled student leader Wuer Kaixi suggested that the individualism in Hou Dejian's lyrics did strike a responsive chord in Beijing students (and he sang a few lines to illustrate his point). The most prominent Chinese dissident, Fang Lizhi, in an article published in the Los Angeles Times on June 11, 1989, also alluded to these Taiwan influences.

It might have been illuminating, as well, to dwell on the historical analogy between the 1989 movement and the anti-Guomindang demonstrations on the mainland in the 1940s, but our sample did not do so. The complaints levelled at the Nationalists in the 1940s were in many ways the same as those levelled at the Communists in 1989: lack of freedom, corruption and inflation. Such an analogy might have alerted the American public to the possibility that the

student movement was not simply, or primarily, an anti-Communist movement, but also a populist uprising against corrupt authority in a longer Chinese tradition.

A striking feature of the spring's events was that a student protest quickly turned into a broad anti-government uprising. Already on April 23, Southerland noted in the Washington Post that intellectuals and workers had come out to back the students. "The question of worker participation in protests is a highly sensitive one in China," he wrote. "The Communist Party is supposed to be a Party of workers, but many factory workers are disgruntled.... Chinese leaders have carefully studied the political situation in Poland, where workers have been able to organize and gain a measure of political influence, and they are seeking to avoid similar events in China." Time magazine made the same point at about the same time, in its issue of May 8, which had an April 30 deadline. From April 27 on, when workers imposed their bodies en masse between student marchers and police, the laobaixing (literally, "old hundred names"; figuratively, the common folk) served as the protectors of the students, many of whom welcomed the physical support.

There was little reporting in our sample on the ambivalent attitude the student leadership had toward worker participation. By mid-May, the students had begun guarding the Great Hall of the People and Zhongnanhai to prevent the outbreak of violence by bands of youths out looking for

action who might be branded "hooligans" by officials. A lot of these non-students were members of a "floating population" of youths from the countryside, without the work permits needed to live in the cities, looking for employment on Beijing construction projects. Some routinely slept under the highway overpasses or on the sidewalk outside the Beijing Railway Station; these sites tended to be depopulated on the nights of the massive demonstrations in and around the square. Others were city youths, dressed in flashy clothes, who were, in the government euphemism, "waiting for employment." The fact that students marched with cordons of marshals to limit the participation of outsiders was reported, but the reasoning behind it was not explained in most of our sample.

WuDunn in the Times was an exception. At the eleventh hour, on June 2, she quoted Beijing University student leader Wang Dan as saying that he believed the movement "is not ready for worker participation because the principles of democracy must first be absorbed by students and intellectuals before they can be spread to others." Shen Tong (after he left China) indicated what might be called in an American context an elitist attitude toward worker participation.* At the same time, Shen acknowledged that

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*Shen was asked at his Harvard presentation whether in planning the demonstrations before April 15 he had considered the workers' role. "We didn't come to a clear conclusion," he said. "But I thought, not workers. [The] country is in [a] dangerous situation. If workers come out,

it was citizen support that gave the students the courage to defy the government and turn polite protest rallies into a sustained movement. In April the movement was a student one, but by late May it became a broad urban anti-government movement, with senior advisers in the background, and some of the press were slow to register the transformation.

4. DENG ASSAILS THE MOVEMENT

A major event in the unfolding of the movement was a harsh editorial drafted by Party leaders that was printed in People's Daily on April 26. Entitled "Take a Clearcut Stand Against Turmoil," it said the purpose of leaders of the students' movement and those behind it "is to poison people's minds, create national turmoil and sabotage the nation's political stability and unity. This is a planned conspiracy, a turmoil which, in essence, aims at negating the leadership of the Communist Party of China and the socialist system." The editorial concluded with an appeal

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it will break the umbrella [by which he meant the fragile grouping of reformist forces]."

Lu Jinghua, who served as spokeswoman for the Beijing Workers' Autonomous Federation on the square from May 19 to June 3, said during a presentation at Harvard on April 30, 1990, that she had been turned back by student marshals when she tried to carry a message to student leader Chai Ling. The students, she said, "wanted to maintain the purity of their movement" and to enter a dialogue with the government on their own.

for all Chinese citizens to "struggle for the quick and resolute quelling of the turmoil."

The term dongluan, which is translated as "turmoil," has a very negative meaning in Chinese political history. It is brought into public discourse by authorities, according to a book on the Beijing Spring by an American scholar and a Chinese student, "to justify any crackdown on a popular movement. The word also has powerful resonance because it evokes memories of the nightmare of the Cultural Revolution, which is referred to as 'ten years of turmoil.' Therefore, the obvious intent in the use of the word is to identify dissent with a chaotic period of Chinese history, and by so doing galvanize popular support for government repression."[10] Only a few reporters, Southerland of the Washington Post being one, tried to explain this in reporting on the student demands, which came to include a call for the retraction of the April 26 editorial.

Time and the Washington Post offered inside information on a meeting among Deng, Premier Li Peng and President Yang Shangkun at which the decision to take a hard line was made. This was the kind of documentary material that over the years American journalists rarely possessed during an unfolding crisis in China, and the reporting of it showed how far the media had come in recent years.

Most media in our sample reported only the harsh words, rather than putting forward the case made by the government

for its actions--the fear that the protests were designed to topple the Party. However, journalists could reasonably point out, and some did so, that the Communist government of China has generally feared any spontaneous expression of opinion from the grass roots. Holley of the Los Angeles Times provided more specifics and depth on the government's point of view, noting on April 27 that Beijing's mayor, Chen Xitong, had made a gesture toward one of the student demands by offering to reveal his assets, and reporting the rationale articulated by Li Peng for taking a hard line.

When the text of the People's Daily editorial calling the movement's leaders "counter-revolutionaries" was broadcast again and again, Southerland pointed out in the Washington Post on April 26 that this was "the equivalent of traitors to the state in Chinese Communist parlance." Should the press have interpreted the editorial to mean a violent crackdown was on the way? Not necessarily, because of what happened next day. The students defied the threat and marched in huge numbers for 16 hours the next day, April 27. Holley aptly noted that the editorial had "backfired" by stimulating stronger protest and generating public support for the protesters. Southerland elaborated on that theme a few days later, pointing out that until the violence outside Zhongnanhai and the People's Daily editorial, "many students were indifferent and unwilling to join the few thousand who demonstrated." This was insightful reporting,

using the classic Chinese source, a major editorial, and linking it with what the journalists were learning in the streets and cafes.

5. THE STUDENT MOVEMENT INTERACTS WITH CHINESE POLITICS

When the government did not follow through on threats contained in the April 26 People's Daily editorial, the hesitation was highlighted by all five of the print media in the study. But the striking dualism in government policy received little attention in the ABC and CBS television reports we sampled.

When the government, seeming to contravene the editorial, relented and offered a dialogue--still refraining from the use of force against the student marchers--both the Washington Post and the New York Times made readers aware that the government's restraint could well be a misleading maneuver. Southerland's intra-Party source cautioned that the decision to take a softer line was "tactical." Kristof, too, warned that "[a] crackdown is still a very real possibility."[11]

Southerland discounted the public posture of the student movement by reporting on April 27, more clearly than others, that the student leadership limited the rhetoric of banners and chants to avoid provoking the authorities. "The students appeared to have made a deliberate attempt not to

provoke the authorities with their slogans," he wrote. "They dropped previous calls for 'an end to dictatorship' and carried banners supporting the Communist Party and socialism." Time magazine, with its later deadline, also made clear that the students' slogans should not be taken at face value. It noted that one student holding a banner supporting the "correct" leadership of the Communist Party was asked which leaders were correct and replied: "None."[12]

In his report on the April 27 march, Southerland took one step beyond most other reporters and sought to explain why the government failed to act on its earlier threats. "Western diplomats watching said they were baffled when the police offered little more than token resistance," he wrote in the paper of April 28. "Diplomats conjectured that the country's leaders underestimated the strength of the democracy movement and realized early today that they could not contain it." The following day, Southerland quoted a "veteran Communist Party member" who explained that "the leadership decided that no force could be used or the fire would break out not only in Beijing but also all over China." Time magazine also suggested that the backdown was the result of opposition to the use of force by Party and security officials.[13] Later, continuing to give the American public a sense of the complicated levels of student aims, tactics, and priorities, and their interaction with

Chinese political maneuvers, several reporters referred to another motive for inaction--the upcoming summit between Deng and Mikhail Gorbachev.

An American official who dealt with China policy complained to us that "the media did not write of the Leninist techniques used by the students and the rings of security the reporters had to pass through to reach student leaders. There was instead an attempt to see them as paragons of democratic virtue. The consequence was that the media set the standard for expectations of a democratic outcome." Wall Street Journal correspondent Adi Ignatius agreed with part of this viewpoint, observing that an authoritarian trend in the student movement was visible right from the start. He recalled walking alongside a student during one of the early marches, interviewing him, when "one of the student leaders walked up...and said 'don't talk to the journalist.... We'll have a press conference [in the square].' These guys are sort of adopting the tactics that the Communist Party uses," Ignatius went on, "control of information, discouraging...spontaneous contact."

In retrospect, opinions in the media were sharply divided as to whether emotional sympathy for the students should have crept into the stories. Vito Maggiolo, who was working as the CNN assignment manager and overseeing troops in the field, recalled: "I would have camera crews and

producers who spent many hours in Tiananmen Square come back and talk to me about...the bureaucracy the students had created and the security and the checkpoints, and actually have some people refer to them as 'fascists' at times."

Mark Mohr of the State Department, who felt the press was too light on the students, told us: "I saw on several occasions a teenage Chinese girl, who was distributing [documents] to the proper persons, literally reprimanded in severe terms for handing out the stuff coming out of the mimeograph machine to reporters. [She was told] 'They're not cleared, these are internal documents.' That should have been reported."

Most journalists evidently felt, as Jim Munson of Canadian Television (CTV) said, that these contradictions faded into insignificance alongside the high aims of the anti-government protest. The students were battling a long-entrenched Leninist government; against it, the genteel methods of a debating society would have gotten them nowhere. Jackie Judd of ABC cautioned against the idea of the under-reporting of lapses by the students "as a metaphor or a symbol for how we [the media] were co-opted by the students. I don't think we were. When you're given two minutes to report on a story," she went on, "you have to give the kernel of it. And the kernel of it wasn't that you had to go through ten student guards to get to the person you wanted to talk to...."

Still, we feel there should have been tougher reporting of the movement's fragmentation and authoritarianism, because these would have thrown light on aspects of the alternative politics the students were offering to the Chinese people. Southerland admitted later: "[W]e could have been tougher on the students...we discussed doing something on the authoritarian set-up on Tiananmen Square. One night," Southerland went on, "I had to pass through eleven check points to get to Chai Ling and it ended in kind of a shoving match between me and the body guards and I remember thinking, this is worse than trying to get into party headquarters.... [T]hey were trying to force me to make a self-criticism for shoving my way through."

New student demands arose as April drew to a close, among them calls for retraction of the April 26 People's Daily editorial, a nationally televised dialogue between student representatives and high-level officials, and reinstatement of the outspoken journalist Qin Benli, who had been fired on April 26 as editor of the Shanghai-based World Economic Herald for publishing articles in praise of Hu Yaobang.

In the wake of the passivity of the authorities on April 27, both student and media expectation began to be that violence would not be used, despite the contrary pattern set by previous such events in China. The signal conveyed by the media was that this time things would be

different--that dissent had neutralized the usual resort to force and repression, that some accommodation would be reached, that several million Beijingers could not have miscalculated in the abandonment of their habitual political caution. From this point until May 19, the eve of martial law, the danger of violence was referred to only occasionally by CBS, by Time magazine, and by the specialists interviewed on Nightline and CNN. Hope may have eclipsed cool calculation.*

Was the movement a "threat to the government"? Time magazine and the Washington Post conveyed the contingent, shifting, often pedestrian nature of student demands. The New York Times referred to the students as presenting a clear challenge to the government, without explaining why the leadership viewed it as such, or substantiating that the student movement amounted to an alternative government.[14]

No doubt, within the existing one-party system, demands which may have seemed limited and reasonable to an American audience were, in fact, startling to the Communist elders sequestered behind the walls of Zhongnanhai. Indeed these old warriors may have defined what constituted a systemic challenge earlier and more accurately than the students. It

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*On the other hand, as sinologist Roderick MacFarquhar pointed out to us, "we should beware of thinking the crackdown of June 4 was inevitable, with a sure progression of events leading up to it--in many ways, the issue of the Beijing Spring is how Deng managed to 'pull it off' [achieve the crackdown] against all odds."

could be argued that recognition of the independent students' union would have created the first legal opposition in 40 years of Communist Party rule, and perhaps the beginnings of a more pluralist system. Even dialogue between students and Chinese leaders on the students' terms meant a tacit admission by the Party that the two sides were equal. A free press would have created the first uncontrolled, independent mechanism for scrutinizing government and party in the history of the PRC.

All three television networks in our study--ABC, CBS, and CNN--saw the story in fairly confrontational terms from the start. ABC World News Tonight on April 18 called the demonstrations a "direct challenge to the Chinese leadership." CBS noted that students were calling for "the legalization of an opposition in China," and on April 27 made the acute summation, by John Sheahan: "The students see their pro-democracy movement as the beginning of a peaceful revolution. The government sees it as a serious challenge to 40 years of Communist rule." In this case the pictures may have led television to an earlier judgment than print attained of just how serious the weight of the student-led movement was to become.

Peppered throughout CNN's broadcasts were comments like Mike Chinoy's on April 22: "In a country whose Communist government has never allowed an open opposition, the scale of the students' victory is extraordinary." Washington Post

correspondent Southerland said later that the print media could perhaps have done more to convey that behind some of the mild student words was a basic challenge to the Chinese Communist leaders:

> I think that maybe we didn't make it clear that these demands they were making were not quite as reasonable in the Chinese context as they might look to be in a Western context.... You know, they were basically asking to be recognized as a legitimate opposition movement, sort of like having a Solidarity [as in Poland] or something. I could see why a Communist Party leadership wouldn't want to take that step and would fight it every way they could. But in the Western context, the demands all sounded very mild, reasonable--"talk to us." There was an element of recognition and legitimizing that would have gone on if the government had taken that step, which would have negated their whole way of operating. I don't think we made that clear, how big these demands actually were, at least in my view. It wasn't quite as reasonable as it looked.

Time often made skillful references to the context of the confrontation, Deng's frame of mind, and the particular leadership fear of worker involvement. "In any country at any time," Time commented in the May 29 issue, "such a confrontation between power and protest would be extraordinary. In China, a nation whose tradition is suffused with respect for authority, last week's outpouring of discontent was nothing short of revolutionary." Time went on--overlooking such events as Nixon's resignation over Watergate and the fall of de Gaulle in 1968: "No major power in the postwar period has ever been so rudely shaken--rocked, in fact to its foundation--by the dissent of its populace."

6. THE STUDENT-GOVERNMENT DIALOGUES

When talks between a group of students and the government began on April 29, the student viewpoints were legitimately the more newsworthy. The statements of government spokesman Yuan Mu looked weak, and perhaps no presentation of them could have made them persuasive to an American audience. One AP story did paraphrase Yuan's call for an end to the boycott of classes, suggesting in return an acknowledgment of student complaints and an implication that more meetings were possible. It quoted Yuan as saying the government "understood the patriotic fervor, the desire to push democracy and deepen the reforms expressed by the students in their marches."

Holley of the Los Angeles Times, scrupulous to explain the situation of the Chinese government, alone mentioned some minor concessions announced by Yuan. There would be no more imported luxury cars for government officials, the spokesman said, and no more top Party meetings at China's seashore resort, Beidaihe. He pointed out that the People's Daily had accepted the need for political reform in its latest editorial, moderating its tone compared with that of April 26. Holley took Yuan at face value, leaving it to his quotations of the students (Wuer Kaixi in this instance) to point to the inadequacies of the arrangement.[15] And only Holley extensively covered Yuan Mu's press conference on May

3, including both his threats of future punishment and his conciliatory gestures--such as an assurance that the government would not use force against the demonstration planned for the following day.

During the brief period of televised dialogues between students and government officials, CBS took sound bites from the student statements, but not the replies from government spokesman Yuan Mu. At Yuan's press conference on May 3, ABC showed him warning against further disruption, and said he offered only "sweet talk."

Some of the press tended to accept the statements of any stray student in the street at face value, while reporting government statements in ways that indicated to readers and viewers that they should be taken with a grain of salt. None in our sample mentioned Yuan Mu's televised criticism of the students' terms for talks--the students demanded not only the right to select their own participants, but also to specify who should represent the government side. Without question a bias had crept into the coverage.

Perhaps reporters in China had lost the habit of relying on close readings of official statements for news, because so much was changing quite openly elsewhere in society. In addition, the inside sources available to most resident correspondents were the liberals around Zhao who wanted to push reform further and advocated the opening to

the outside world. The conservatives did not confide in foreigners.

At other times during the protest movement, when the government was silent or preoccupied, some reporters found ways of articulating its viewpoint, and were able to avoid the traditional "unavailable for comment" disclaimer, which can be misused by less enterprising journalists to give the appearance of balance. Southerland of the Washington Post on occasion tried to explain the government's point of view even when there was no government spokesman to quote. And he found officials willing to speak on background about the government's rationale and decision-making process, even though they were not part of it. CNN ran excerpts from official speeches and press conferences, and from CCTV, the Chinese government station. The New York Times on rare occasions ran texts; readers could have benefited from more.

There is an American journalistic tradition that if a reporter gives a party to the story the option of stating its case, that is enough. "We had a rule to...insert the government's side," said Nate Polowetzky, who supervised the Associated Press coverage of the China crisis from New York. "AP's kneejerk reaction is to insert a graf in many stories saying 'no comment from the government.'" Polowetzky's view was that governments are able to take care of themselves, and if they choose to remain silent, it's not up to AP to

fill in for them and reflect what is known to be their rationale.

On the other hand, some editors have begun to operate on the assumption that inserting a "no comment" automatically makes the silent party look worse. They seek to operate on the principle that media should seek out a balance of viewpoints rather than simply reporting the absence of one particular viewpoint. "We didn't take the view that 'No comment' is enough," said Valerie Strauss, who edited the China copy on the Foreign Desk of the Washington Post. "Southerland would talk to sources about why the government is doing something. For example, why are they so crazy about the workers? He would say the government is known to fear a Solidarity [an independent union as in Poland]. He would always put it in his copy."*

However, Jay Mathews, who covered China for the Post in the early '80s, observed to us that the government view in most Post stories did not appear "until the third paragraph; the lead was only what happened to the forces of light." Mathews added: "Still, if you had balanced the story faithfully, the headline would still be on the student

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*Southerland's analyses of the government mindset were fairly constant. On April 21 he reported that Party leaders were disturbed by the protests because they had targeted Zhongnanhai, the "Party citadel." The following day he cited a news conference by Premier Li Peng early in April in which Li argued that hasty democratization could destabilize China. And on April 23 he explained the government's fear of the Solidarity phenomenon.

side." Mathews was not criticizing the editors back home, but reminding us that the student side was the real news story for the American media and people. Tom Feyer, assistant foreign editor of the New York Times, looking back, stressed that the media should try to "explain motivations even when it's not possible to actually get a government, or the other side...to explain itself."

A striking choice of headline was evident in the Los Angeles Times on a Holley story that led the paper on April 30. The lead said "Chinese government officials held a highly publicized meeting Saturday with a handpicked group of students in an attempt to end a wave of pro-democracy demonstrations, but protest leaders denounced the move as an empty gesture." The two-deck head said "Beijing Talks Denounced by Protesters/Meeting of Officials and Selected Students Called Empty Gesture." By the reporter's yardstick, the most newsworthy aspect of the story may have been that the meeting was held and televised nationwide. Both were not only unprecedented, but would have been unimaginable two weeks earlier.

Winston Lord, who served as United States Ambassador to Beijing until April 1989, was generally laudatory in speaking of press coverage of the entire crisis. But he did say: "[C]ertainly the coverage had no sympathy for the government and was overwhelmingly sympathetic to the students. I didn't see Deng's viewpoint expressed at all.

Perhaps it was in the written press, but not on television." The journalists could rejoin that Deng's viewpoint was presented in the April 26 editorial which they fully reported, and that he chose to make no public statement over his own name throughout the crisis.

Feyer of the New York Times measured his words on looking back on whether the media gave sufficient attention to the Chinese government point of view: "We're all human beings. This is a very human story. It's very hard to set your emotions aside. I think there probably is some merit in the argument that the press, to some extent, took the students' side. I think that was probably inevitable, but it had to be watched throughout.... [The reporters] were obviously meticulous in trying to separate their personal dealings from what they were writing, but it's not always possible. We probably should have had some more criticism of the students." We agree.

Shen Tong, the Beijing University student leader, recalled the United States press's being less involved and more professional than that of Europe or Hong Kong. "No American journalist was constantly in my room," he recalled, "but there were Hong Kong, British--such as BBC reporters--and French reporters. They were there as consultants," he went on, "to tell me how to deal with the questions during the press conference and how to take the opportunities to make some news.... As one of the BBC

reporters said, 'You have to keep the story rolling.' That was quite an amazing phrase for me." The distinction between this behavior and the relative detachment of most American journalists is noteworthy and puts complaints about emotionalism of the Americans in perspective.

7. CONNECTIONS, FACTIONS, SUPPORTERS

"An unanswered question so far," Kristof wrote in the New York Times on May 1, "is whether a faction in the leadership is encouraging the demonstrations, or using them. Such speculation is inevitable here, because China is a country where historically the conspiracy theorists have usually been right. While the overwhelming majority of students clearly rose on their own initiative, it is possible that some leaders who favor more rapid change are doing what they can to help the students succeed.... So far, however, there is no evidence that the student unrest is related to power struggles within the party."

Student leaders now in exile have stated there was contact between government officials--and even some army generals--and the student leadership in Tiananmen Square. But they deny that the contacts predated the start of the

movement and insist that the offers of alliance were refused.*

Few reporters were able to probe for hidden forces behind the throne--or behind the shaky tents--of the student leaders. Many of the correspondents interviewed after the events said they believed that researchers linked to Zhao Ziyang, and senior intellectuals, played a backstage role in manipulating, or trying to manipulate, the students, either directly or through the junior faculty members who served as the student advisers. But there was not much reporting on advisers to the students at the time, sometimes for the very good reason that the students themselves refused to reveal their existence, much less their identities. Student leaders now in the West maintain that they had advisers--graduate students, junior faculty members, and government officials--but were not linked to any faction within the government.** At any rate, the role of senior advisers, whether linked with Zhao or not, was greater than the picture given in our sample suggested. We wonder if anyone tried to interview Li Shuxian, the wife of Fang Lizhi, who

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*Shen Tong, responding to questions at the Brandeis conference on China, 9/16/89, said, "There began some contact because of the movement, but not before that." Of the offers to work out a deal with Party or army factions, he said, "We refused all this."

**Shen Tong said in a presentation at Harvard University on 4/4/90, that there were thirty-eight intellectuals who served as advisers to his student group (the Olympic Institute) and Wang Dan's (the Democracy Salon), who formed an "unofficial opposition party."

was advising Wang Dan and other student leaders, or Chen Zimin or Wang Runtao, whose Social and Economic Research Institute was likewise a backstage force for the student democracy movement.

When the demonstrations broke out, the media turned to Chinese students in the United States for an interpretation of events. These students became in many ways surrogates for their peers in China. They became instant experts, although many had been away from China for years. They were looked upon as sources, even though many of them only had second-hand information.

In our media sample, the rapid buildup of the Chinese student population in the United States and its implications regarding the intellectual elite of China were discussed only by the Los Angeles Times and the Washington Post. On May 2 in the Washington Post, Mathews summarized the burgeoning growth of the Chinese student population at American universities, and the problems it raised for China. He discussed the brain drain, the Chinese government's attempts to restrict the flow of students, and the limited career opportunities for intellectuals in China. And he mentioned the high percentage of top officials' children on American campuses.

The Los Angeles Times in a sidebar on May 5 brought up many of the same issues. It spoke of the alienation of Chinese students from their own country which had been

evident for a long time. It reported their frustration over low social status and lack of mobility, and their antagonism toward Chinese bureaucrats and official nepotism. These attitudes shed light, the newspaper correctly said, on some of the roots of the protest movement.

There was little coverage of pro-democracy organizations operating within the United States before the demonstrations, though the Chinese Alliance for Democracy, active in a number of North American cities, was singled out by the Chinese government as early as the first week of May as one of the instigators of the demonstrations. Individuals affiliated with the Alliance were occasionally quoted, but there was little coverage of the group itself--its origins or history--which would not have been difficult. Readers gained no impression of the extent to which the Alliance helped the student movement. There was only one mention of the New York-based magazine China Spring in the sample, though some of its articles had been read by the Beijing students, and the Chinese government after June 4, 1989, attributed a large role to the contacts the student movement had within North America. Perhaps the Beijing authorities were exaggerating the connections, but the media did not offer readers and viewers an assessment of the matter.

8. PROTESTS GROW

On May 4, as students marched to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the famous Chinese student demonstration for "science and democracy," which also centered on Tiananmen Square, Communist Party Secretary Zhao Ziyang presented a conciliatory face to the movement, in a speech to a conference of the Asian Development Bank in Beijing. It was carried by all three newspapers in our sample, as well as Time and the Associated Press. All reported its significant moderation in policy line toward the demonstrators, but none focused on growing signs of political conflict within the government.

Perhaps for the print media, the basic fact of the factional struggle between Premier Li Peng and Zhao was not news when Zhao made his remarks on May 4. It had been referred to the month before. The student march that day and its relationship to the May 4 Movement of seventy years before were the focal points of all of the lead stories.

ABC's Carrel did place the Zhao speech in the context of the power struggle. Carrel referred to Zhao embracing the student cause, offering to meet demands and promising to use peaceful means (in contrast to the earlier reports of the leadership threatening the use of force). He ended by saying, rather cryptically, that Zhao's stand suggests "political shakeups." The following day, on a Ted Koppel

Nightline show, a Chinese graduate student at Harvard, Pei Minxin, opined that the government was divided. As a result of the division, Pei said, "it may be a long time before the government can use force" against the demonstrators.

CBS, on May 4, said it was not clear "if the government can remain passive." Three days later there was the apt comment by John Sheahan that "restraint doesn't mean the leaders will welcome democracy."

Some journalists, government officials, and sinologists later maintained that Zhao's May 4 speech should have cued reporters that he was challenging Deng. They criticized the Beijing press corps for failing to emphasize sufficiently the power struggle within the Communist Party and its relationship to the protest movement. Merle Goldman of Boston University said that once Zhao gave his speech to the Asian Development Bank, the gauntlet was thrown, and it was clear that the party chief had challenged Deng's earlier edict that the student protests must be quenched, by force if need be. An analyst in a U.S. government agency agreed. "The deep split should have been clear with Zhao's May 4 statement," he said. "This showed a big league power struggle."

Dorinda Elliott, a Newsweek reporter who went on leave on May 4 and missed the height of the movement, criticized the priorities in the coverage. She said the power struggle, which had been brewing since the summer of 1988,

became "central" in early May and made the students "really sort of irrelevant."

Looking back, some reporters felt American diplomats had pointed them in the other direction from power struggle. David Schweisberg of UPI complained that "Winston Lord for three and a half years sat in Beijing and told everybody how the leaders really were stable and united." The same point was made in an op-ed column in the Los Angeles Times (6/1/89) by Jim Mann, who quoted Lord as saying in December of 1988 that "[w]e do not see a fractious Chinese leadership engaged in an intense struggle for power."

Amanda Bennett, who covered China for the Wall Street Journal in the early 1980s and returned after June 4, said later, "From early May I kept asking myself, 'Why are they letting these students do this? This can't be happening without someone letting it happen. Where is the power? In whose interest is this?' There was no manipulator, that was clear. But why wasn't it stopped? [Sitting in New York] I wasn't getting the answers from [the news stories that emerged from] China." Was not the May 4 speech of Zhao at least a clue to the fact that a struggle was under way below the surface?

Seth Faison of the South China Morning Post (Hong Kong), who also wrote for the Boston Globe, pointed out that "there was a great distraction on the streets. May 4 was a huge demonstration.... That's the much more obvious

story.... It would have taken great self-restraint to step back and resist the obvious story and look for the deeper one. Also, the power struggle was not out there handed to you on a plate. It took analysis. It's only in retrospect that we go back and read those speeches and see how clear the split was. At the time we didn't know if Zhao was representing everyone in the government by giving a more conciliatory line. As it turned out, he was not."

Valerie Strauss, handling the China copy on the foreign desk of the Washington Post, argued that the Asian Development Bank speech "didn't necessarily mean a real split because they had decided at the end of April not to crack down [on the student march of April 27]. There was no way to know that Zhao was not speaking for the whole leadership." Subsequently, others in the leadership such as Hu Qili (May 6) and even Li Peng (May 16) took an apparently conciliatory tone.

On this issue there are different opinions and probably will continue to be so. Nevertheless, Zhao put himself in conflict with the April 26 editorial and no one said so. Many informed Chinese knew of the internal power struggle and interviews with them would have brought it in timely fashion to the attention of the American public.

Some days later, Southerland of the Post was able to offer a tantalizing glimpse of the underlying frictions in a May 9 story. "Some observers," he wrote, "said that Zhao,

considered the leader of a liberal reform party grouping, appeared to be seizing the political initiative from more conservative leaders with his conciliatory remarks directed at the students."

The same day, exiled Chinese journalist Liu Binyan noted in an opinion piece in the New York Times that "a high-level power struggle is also restraining the regime. Neither the endangered Zhao Ziyang nor the old men trying to get rid of him dare take responsibility for suppressing the mass movement. In the standoff, a small power vacuum has appeared." This was one answer (later, it appeared, the correct one) to Bennett's question of where the power was and why the movement wasn't being stopped in early May.

9. A MEDIA HIATUS

Coverage of the protest movement subsided between May 4 and May 13 (especially for television), as many reporters understandably were busy preparing their packages for the upcoming Sino-Soviet summit.* Although some reporters did mention that the summit would provide an opportunity for the students to renew the demonstrations, no one expected that

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*Holley of the Los Angeles Times and Ignatius of the Wall Street Journal (who is outside our sample) both reflected with the benefit of hindsight that the time they spent on background articles for the visit of Gorbachev would have been put to better use in covering the evolution of the student movement on the campuses.

the demonstrations would multiply, and one article in the Los Angeles Times, picked up from Reuters, suggested that the demonstrations would be suspended.

Time magazine's headline on May 15, "Softening Up the Hard Line," reflecting the events of a week before, captured the change in government tone in the days before the Gorbachev summit. The newsweekly's story spoke of a "soft offensive...newly pliable bureaucrats...the government's placid tolerance."* Jim Abrams of AP wrote on May 12 that "the government has acted with restraint after threatening a crackdown and mobilizing troops early in the campaign. There has been no serious attempt to stop the demonstrations and the government has agreed to meet selected students...."

Meanwhile a widespread boycott of college classes continued and the dialogues between students and government officials broke down, but there was little reporting on these matters. Plans were laid to stage a hunger strike, which created a split within the student movement's leadership, but little attention was paid to that either.[16]

By the time the hunger strike began on May 13, the networks had flown in big-name reporters to cover the Deng-Gorbachev summit, mostly relegating the resident correspondents to subsidiary roles. Chinoy of CNN was an

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*The story did recognize that after the summit "the government's soft line on dissent is likely to be severely tested."

exception and assumed a more prominent role in his network's stepped-up coverage, even though anchorman Bernard Shaw was in China. The print media all supplemented their coverage with Moscow-based reporters. The Associated Press brought its contingent up from three people to five--all with China experience.*

All the networks used their advance teams in China to prepare background pieces on Sino-Soviet relations. CNN was making an effort to cover more major world events live, as a manifestation of the internationalization of the network's coverage, designed to match the global breadth of its broadcast outlets. Unlike the other networks, which sought to create a package of background and feature stories, CNN approached the event like a wire service--prepared for immediate coverage of breaking spot news, at the expense of depth and background.**

Student demonstrations overshadowed the government-to-government talks between Gorbachev and the Chinese leaders,

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*"One of the glories of AP is that there were no parachute journalists," said Polowetzky, who then headed AP's foreign news operation--referring to general reporters flown in from breaking story to breaking story around the world, without any particular background on the story. There were two other AP staffers with China experience who handled the copy on the desk in New York City, he added.

**The CNN feature spots during the first days of the summit were a description of biking in Beijing, a tour with Raisa Gorbachev, and a photo-montage on dragons. CBS, meanwhile, ran thoughtful and socially illuminating features such as the return of a Chinese journalist to a village he had terrorized as a teenage Red Guard during the Cultural Revolution.

and this altered the media decisions on what pre-packaged background segments should be aired. Still, many of the features prepared in advance were printed or aired without significant change. This was particularly true for the three networks, the Associated Press and the Los Angeles Times, all of which offered extensive packages of background and context relating to China's new role in the world and the internal changes this had wrought. The other media in the study--Time, the Washington Post and the New York Times--used less background that was unrelated to the protest movement.

10. PREPARING FOR GORBACHEV

CBS decided to send anchorman Dan Rather to the summit after he and executive producer Tom Bettag dropped in on Beijing earlier in the year while President George Bush was paying a one-day visit. Bettag later said he sensed "something was about to pop" in China. The CBS reporters were sent out to the provinces before the summit to do features on economic development and modernization in China. Sending Rather to Beijing was a major logistical operation, as was CNN's dispatch of Bernard Shaw. ABC, even without the presence of its anchor, mustered six crews and correspondents, and there was a separate crew and correspondent (James Walker) for "Nightline."

CNN sent a forty-member advance team to Beijing weeks before the summit and later sent more people to supplement the coverage. The ultimate cost came to more than $2 million. There were six crews, six correspondents and various producers.

Even with all these people, when the demonstrations coincided with the summit and created a double-barreled story, the staffing was insufficient. CNN and some other news organizations staffed Tiananmen Square twenty-four hours a day at the height of the protest movement, from May 15 on. CNN international news director Eason Jordan said his people ended up on duty twenty to twenty-two hours a day during that time, and many journalists, print and broadcast alike, had a similarly gruelling experience.*

The equipment included CNN's own portable satellite dish. Pictures from Tiananmen Square were transmitted by cable to Central Chinese Television (CCTV) and from there to the CNN (and CBS) dishes at their hotels. Other foreign networks used the CCTV satellite dish, at its headquarters, which meant they had to book broadcast times because of the limited capacity. This was the first time China permitted outside networks to bring their own satellite dishes into the country.

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*David Holley of the Los Angeles Times, asked what he would have done differently, replied: "Get more sleep."

CBS had seven crews in Beijing at the height of its coverage (during the summit week). Rather was backed by his "A team" of veteran correspondents, including Charles Kuralt, Bruce Morton, Bob Simon, Susan Spencer, Richard Roth and Barry Peterson. CBS used resident Beijing correspondent John Sheahan, and for China expertise brought in Bette Bao Lord, the Chinese-born writer who had spent the previous three years in Beijing while her husband served as American ambassador.

The New York Times had the simplest operation, with its husband-and-wife team of reporters, Kristof and WuDunn, carrying the story almost alone until after June 4--when two former China reporters arrived--though there was some help in summit coverage from the Moscow bureau chief, Bill Keller. The Washington Post left most of the China coverage to Southerland. He had support from Moscow bureau chief Michael Dobbs and columnist Jim Hoagland during the summit. The Post used relatively little supportive material from wires or staff outside China, so the space allotted to China copy was smaller than in the other newspapers.

The Los Angeles Times used Holley alone until the summit, when Moscow correspondent Michael Parks came in. Holley and Parks did the most extensive package of pre-summit stories on the Sino-Soviet relationship. The Los Angeles Times devoted more space to China coverage than the other two newspapers.

Time magazine relied largely on its two resident Beijing correspondents, Sandra Burton and Jaime A. FlorCruz, with some help from the Moscow bureau during the summit and from reporters in Washington who had previously been in China.

The Associated Press started with the largest Beijing staff--three fulltime correspondents, Bureau Chief Jim Abrams, Kathy Wilhelm and John Pomfret. Two extra reporters--Dan Biers from Hong Kong and Terril Jones from Tokyo, both Chinese-speakers--came in to help with the summit coverage and stayed on for the duration. Like the networks, AP staffed the square 24 hours a day--until the last night of June 3-4.

Despite all these resources, in retrospect, many field reporters and home office administrators said they recognized that this period in mid-May was understaffed by most of the media on which we have focused. Once the hunger strike and the Gorbachev visit moved into high gear, the plethora of news angles became difficult to encompass in a single roundup, and the coverage, of necessity in the circumstances, became double-barreled (two stories flowing from beneath one headline).

Feyer of the New York Times said in retrospect, "We probably should have sent more reporters in before we did. Nick and Sheryl were tireless...but there were angles that were not covered sufficiently because they were only two

people, even though they were each doing about two stories a day of 1,000 to 1,500 words each."

Indeed, one look at what Time had to squeeze into its May 29 weekly story (deadline May 20) was mindboggling: the start of the hunger strike, the arrival of Gorbachev, the massive march of May 17 that brought entire work units (including portions of government ministries and army units) into the streets, the concomitant expansion of the student movement into a people's movement, the forced alteration of Gorbachev's schedule, the revelation made to Gorbachev by Zhao that Deng was still China's boss, three meetings of various leaders with students (at a hospital, at the Great Hall of the People, in Tiananmen Square), the evolution of the movement's aims to target Li and Deng, the establishment of an autonomous workers' union, the power struggle that resulted in the purge of Zhao, the decision to move army units into Beijing, the declaration of martial law, the "pulling of the plug" on foreign live satellite broadcasts, and the spectacle of the people of Beijing blocking truckloads of dazed troops all across the city.

These were just the highlights, without considering important events outside the capital, such as an American naval visit to Shanghai and the eruption of demonstrations all across China. Naturally a few items were given short shrift. Few blockbuster stories of recent years have involved such a spread of significant story elements

contained in one city. In news magazine terms, "every [one of these] event[s] could have been a cover story of its own," said Melinda Liu of Newsweek. The headquarters offices, given a sharper sense of history unfolding, might have had more staff, earlier, both in Beijing and other parts of China.

The drama involving Gorbachev and the students changed complexion from hour to hour and reporters found themselves scrambling to cover events spread across Beijing, rescheduled and relocated, as a million demonstrators blocked even the bicycle routes. Some have suggested that the massive volume of coverage of the demonstrations during the summit week was "coincidental," because the cameras just happened to be there for Gorbachev. But it was not coincidence that the protest leaders chose to stage their hunger strike in that place at that time. They intended it to take advantage of the Gorbachev visit. What's more, the impending summit was clearly a factor in the restraint shown initially by the Chinese authorities, toward both the students and the media.

The events would have been significant (for China) without either Gorbachev or the additional media, and would have been covered by a sizeable American media presence in Beijing. The "parachutists" (jacks-of-all-trades sent in to cover a breaking story) would have arrived in any event

(although perhaps not with television anchors among them) once the movement escalated.

From May 15 through May 19, it seemed that all Chinese government officials were either worrying about Gorbachev, preoccupied with struggles within the government, or out marching in support of the hunger strikers. "I had the sense the government had stopped functioning," said Bernard Gwertzman, foreign editor of the New York Times, referring to that week and afterwards, in the initial limbo of martial law. "The [government] people were out of sight. Our government sources had joined the students." As a result, once the hunger strike began, the coverage was skewed away from the political preoccupations of the government. All the networks, especially CNN, concentrated on coverage of the square or the summit. There was an occasional flash of sympathy for the government's embarrassment and some discussion of efforts at compromise. But such stories about the government as did appear tended to view the events through Zhao's perspective.

On May 14 when negotiations occurred between the students and the government, in an effort to get the students off Tiananmen Square before Gorbachev arrived the next day, AP and CNN were the only news organizations in our sample to discuss the talks seriously. The government displayed "a conciliatory approach and a relaxed attitude," CNN's Chinoy said, but ultimately students demanded

"concessions the government simply felt unable to make, among them that talks be televised nationally and high-level officials take part." The Associated Press also gave a full account of the talks.*

Mark Hopkins, who had covered China for the Voice of America and watched the crisis from its Boston bureau, said that during this crucial period, the media "should have relied more on people who knew something about China." Because of an insufficiency of China experience, he claimed, the Chinese government side was not told. Amanda Bennett, a former China correspondent for the Wall Street Journal, who returned during the crisis, sympathized with the parachute reporters without China background, some of whom were criticized for giving short shrift to what was going on within the government. "For journalists the enemy is usually the government," she said. "But here, both sides stonewall the media. Context gives China experts this awareness. Otherwise, for journalists it's a binary system, a zero-sum game. So automatically the media assumes the students are right and good and honest. The China experience becomes a superego to check you: Wait! This is China. It's not that easy."

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*Dan Biers reported Zhao's plea that the summit not be disrupted, visits to the square by Mayor Chen Xitong, and a meeting between students and reformist Party official Yan Mingfu. AP also reported details of what the government had offered and what the students had demanded.

Jordan, CNN's international news director, who from Atlanta helped to coordinate his network's China coverage, disagreed with the suggestion that more could have been done to cover the government's viewpoint during that seminal week. CNN interviewed many sinologists in the United States to compensate for lack of access to the Chinese government, but Jordan insisted that "it was impossible to tell both sides of the story thoroughly, because one side was not willing to speak and its views were not well known. You didn't know what the [government's] thinking was at many times." We feel that the issue was not so much a lack of reporting of the "government side" as insufficient attention to the all-important question of conflict within the government at this stage of the unfolding events.

It is worth noting that despite the demonstrations, China permitted full coverage of the summit meeting by foreign journalists, and provided facilities and access not available in normal times (such as visas for large numbers of staff, cellular telephones, satellite dishes and the stationing of cameras on the reviewing stand atop the Tiananmen Gate). At no time after the demonstrations began was there a serious attempt to keep journalists out of China. Until after the Sino-Soviet summit, accreditation in the PRC had never been easier. Even at the last minute, reporters and journalistic technicians kept arriving through Hong Kong on tourist visas, without accreditation--many of

them complete with massive camera equipment. None were stopped prior to June 4, and those on tourist visas could travel from Beijing to many other cities.

We noted earlier the absence of the United States government from any apparent role in the Beijing spring. The Chinese government, too, seemed uncharacteristically invisible and light-handed. So it was that the crisis took on the form of a drama played out between the Chinese people and the American media, a people expressing its pent-up feelings directly to the world, over and above realpolitik and its modes.

11. SUBJECTIVITY AND PROFESSIONALISM

The powerful symbolic act of the hunger strike, which began on May 13 and was called off, apparently without loss of life, a week later, made the Beijing Spring, and its coverage, more emotional than before. The strike won the hearts of millions of Chinese--and Americans--and transformed the student movement into a broader mass movement. Eating--and not eating--mean something special in China, a country where people traditionally greet each other by asking "Have you eaten?" rather than "How are you?" and where death by starvation was a routine occurrence for thousands of years.

Is a hunger strike still a hunger strike if some of the strikers consume yogurt, beer or milk, or eat a meal in a restaurant with a reporter? A number of reporters--at least six of the nineteen we interviewed who were in Beijing during the hunger strike--had information that a few students were consuming foods that would provide enough nutrition to preserve their health, if not to sate their appetites. Several saw or knew of the drinking of beer, milk or yogurt and the eating of crackers or chocolate by a number of students on the square. Sarah Lubman, a graduate student who worked as a Washington Post stringer, said she knew of hunger strikers who took breaks, and ate solid food, on the campus of Beijing University. She recalled that when she asked one friend why he did it, he winked and said, "This is about more than just being hungry, you know."

Jan Wong of the Toronto Globe and Mail said that a number of hunger strikers ate openly in the square "all along," in the presence of many reporters. The Canadian reporter felt this should have been reported, but she was one of the very few to do so.

We know of only one contemporary reference by a United States news organization to the hunger strikers' consumption of nutritious food. It appeared, in passing, in the twenty-sixth paragraph of a thirty-six-paragraph story, deep inside the Washington Post of May 18. "Many hunger strikers drank water from canteens made from empty glucose solution

bottles," wrote Southerland. "While refusing solid food, some drank soda and liquid yogurt. A few refused all liquid." Southerland himself said later: "My feeling at the time was that the majority were probably sticking to the hunger strike, and there was a real threat of people losing their lives over this thing. The informed vote was that the majority were on a hunger strike, and if you consider an average student's diet, this is a very serious thing to be trying to do."

There was broad awareness that John Pomfret of AP took Wuer Kaixi, the most charismatic and widely-interviewed among the student leaders, to dinner during the hunger strike. Pomfret defended his lack of reporting of the fact of the hunger strike leader's eating. "Recall, it wasn't a one-person hunger strike," he told us. "Wuer Kaixi was just one individual, a good spokesman, a good talker. I was put in a difficult situation over that meal. Here was a guy I had just started to work with and he had asked me to keep certain things discreet, and then he asked me for a meal. What can you do? Not reporting the detail of one man's weakness does not mean that I presented the hunger strike and the overall student movement as lily-white."

"This is minutiae," the AP reporter complained of a focus on some students eating during the hunger strike. "If you read all we put out, we did not present the movement as

pure, we did not prettify it. For example, I wrote about [its] organizational troubles."

Fox Butterfield of the New York Times, a former Beijing correspondent, said focusing on a few students breaking the hunger strike would have been trivial, and he put the matter in a wider perspective. "Many of the strikers were genuinely weakened by their fasting," he pointed out, "and the reason for this is important. Chinese students are fed a very poor diet. They get weak and must sleep long periods. If the reporters made a mistake on the hunger strikers, it was in not reporting how this poor diet influenced them--it may have explained why some of them took food."

Seth Faison of the South China Morning Post in Hong Kong, gave a different explanation of the non-reporting of lapses from the hunger striking. "We would have felt that it was playing into the hands of the government which was doing everything they could to discredit these guys," he said. "Because everybody was sympathetic to the students. And in general they had a lot more to be sympathetic about than the government did. If the government had been reasonable from day one, I think the press might have given the students a harder time. But the government was not reasonable from day one.... And so one's heart naturally went out to these students. They were asking for things we know and cherish...[and] the government stonewalled them,

ignored them and eventually shot them. That basic story was reported accurately."

We do not wish to blow out of proportion the failure to report lapses from the hunger strike. It was a minor flaw in student conduct, and at any rate the hunger strikers were only one small part of a huge, diverse pro-democracy movement. Still, we feel the American public should have been given all the salient facts and hence made up their own minds about what weight, if any, to give to hunger strikers taking food within the larger picture of what the students stood for and strove for. This lapse in reporting was a symptom of what some journalists themselves identified as a flaw in their coverage: a bias toward the students that while understandable, was not consistent with the professional goal of objectivity.

The president of the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Beijing, Jim Munson of Canadian Television (CTV), who had spent most of his career as a "parachutist" in the Middle East and elsewhere, but had become a resident Beijing correspondent in 1987, confessed to a mood of subjectivity: "We were totally involved...with the students," he said. "We lost our objectivity for a while. I certainly did. It was hard to be objective with a government that seemed...run by a group of thugs who had no real right to kill their children.... I found my anti-government rhetoric rather shrill on occasion. And you could see it in copy. And I

think the responsibility lies with the reporter...to sit back and say 'Hold on just a second. Is this the way I normally cover stories elsewhere?' I'm not holding any guilt about that, by the way, because I think it was one of those rare occasions in history that maybe it wasn't so bad to lose your objectivity.... But I sometimes wonder whether we built peoples' expectations up too much."

Jeff Sommer of Newsday, who had been based in Beijing previously, explained the starting point of some of the emotionalism. "China is a very rough place," he said, "[but here in the spring] we began to find people in the streets speaking to us in a more open way than had ever been true before.... Ordinary people were beginning to come out and say that they weren't afraid anymore, they didn't care about the consequences. All of this had a tremendous impact, I think, emotionally.... There perhaps was a need for all of us to have struggled more than we did to be skeptical."

Under normal journalistic practice, it is the role of the editor, or the executive producer, to keep correspondents in the field from identifying too closely with their beats or, in the phrase in common usage, "going native." Nate Polowetzky of the Associated Press, who oversaw the agency's China copy, saw a need for such a corrective hand. He maintained that the wire service, because of its omnivorous clientele, tended more than other news organizations to carry a "counter-trend" story, one

that goes against the established wisdom of the pack. "I had the feeling there was a danger I had to forestall, that [the copy from Beijing] would become one-sided in favor of the students. We had a rule to avoid emotional phrases."

Gwertzman, the New York Times foreign editor, took a similar approach. "All the correspondents got caught up in it [the movement]," he said. "It was hard for them to write objectively. We had to watch their copy, to make sure we were not an advocate. We urged caution." The record tends to bear out Polowetzky and Gwertzman on the restrained tone of the AP and the Times copy, yet it contains very few stories that mentioned negative details about the students such as squabbling, running their movement in an authoritarian way, or lapsing from the rules of a hunger strike.

One reporter of the Beijing Spring, a parachutist who did not wish to be identified, was reminded of coverage of the Intifada. Reporters on the West Bank were as emotionally involved with the Palestinian children and youths who challenged armed Israeli troops, he said, as they were later with the Chinese students engaged in a hunger strike. But there was one aspect of the Middle East story that checked any tendency toward emotional writing and a loss of objectivity. "We knew that there was an audience back home, the Jewish community, that would blow us out of the water if we showed our bias," he said. "We also knew

that there was no equivalent audience to keep us honest on the China story."

12. THE STUDENTS, THE WORLD, AND THE VILLAGES

The United States media, television in particular, set the crisis in a context of increased outside contact and rising expectations. The ABC Evening News of May 14 had a segment by Mark Litke showing disco dancing, churches, and Kentucky Fried Chicken, with the theme of a "revolution of rising expectations" brought about by Western influence. CBS's Bob Simon did a similar feature three days later that showed modern Chinese fashions, cosmetic surgery, body building, and public necking, with Bette Bao Lord speaking of Chinese culture opening itself to the West. There was little attention to the changes or lack of changes in more substantive institutions--in legal procedure, for example, or the freedom to form political organizations--which might have shown how resistant to Western influence China remained in important ways, and suggested limits to how far the students could change China in one springtime.

The Gorbachev visit carried enormous symbolic weight for the Chinese government. Close relations were being restored after a thirty-year interregnum, and Gorbachev was coming to visit Deng, and not vice versa. As a Los Angeles Times editorial put it: "There was a time...when both

countries were content to describe their relationship as one between 'big brother and little brother.' Now they agree they are equals, with neither claiming ideological authority over the other and both explicitly accepting that there can be diverse paths to the same political goals."[17]

The expectation placed on the summit meant that the government's humiliation at the major disruption of Gorbachev's schedule was all the more profound. The upstaging of the summit by the demonstrations caused a "major loss of face," wrote Kristof in the New York Times. Instead of signalling the government's new importance on the world scene, the week's events demonstrated its inability to satisfy its own people. And the foreign press, which had originally been invited to help celebrate the government's triumph, was there to publicize its embarrassment.

The press recognized early that Gorbachev was a source of inspiration to many students--symbolizing the possibility of democratic reform in a Communist country[18]--and reported the banners the students waved adulating Gorbachev as a "true reformer."[19] One banner in Shanghai cried in English, "Can Deng Do A Gorbachev?" It was a complex issue, for the media as for the Chinese students, whether enthusiasm for Gorbachev necessarily meant a rejection of Communist Party rule. Dobbs of the Washington Post quoted one student as saying, "We still place a lot of hope in the Party. If we thought there was no hope, we would not come here."[20] But

Keller in the New York Times on May 15 took a more radical view of the Soviet leader's significance. "Many of the students see in Mr. Gorbachev a vigorous symbol of political liberalization," he wrote, "and regard his visit as an implicit rebuke to China's own leadership." Ambiguity as to Gorbachev's significance for the democratic cause can hardly be criticized, for within the Soviet Union itself, and even within Gorbachev's own mind, the goal of "reforming Communism" was not clear.

In general, the press saw the movement as Western-inspired and Gorbachev did not fit into this framework. Thus, reporters tended not to portray him within the context of Eastern-bloc Communism, but rather as a highly Westernized, open-minded world leader. Would a reporter from a Communist country have analyzed the situation the same way? Instead of focusing on the students' quoting of Lincoln, for example, a Bulgarian might have focused on the students' singing the "Internationale." The framework used was understandable since the American media were after all reporting for the American public. Yet an American tilt becomes more problematic when news organizations, such as all those in our sample, provide news on a global basis, their China stories watched and read in Australia and Poland and Nigeria, as well as in North America.

The media saw other reasons for the Soviet leader's appeal. For example, the New York Times noted that the recent trial of late Party chief Leonid Brezhnev's son-in-law resonated deeply with the demonstrators, who were angry about corruption and nepotism. Another reason for Gorbachev's popularity was his open and amiable personal style. His relative youth, his ease with crowds, his sense of humor--all these made students admire him. They stood in sharp contrast to the style of the Chinese octogenarians, who were humorless and ruled from behind the gates of Zhongnanhai. In the Los Angeles Times of May 15, Holley and Michael Parks translated this placard: "You're 58 and I'm 85," contrasting the youthful Gorbachev with China's paramount leader, Deng, who was almost 85. And in the New York Times of May 16 Kristof noted, "Even Mr. Gorbachev's demeanor seemed an embarrassing contrast for the Chinese leadership. Instead of driving by with the tinted windows of his limousine rolled up, Mr. Gorbachev...drove by with his window down so that he could wave at the crowds."

The press pointed out a certain amount of opportunism in the students' decision to demonstrate during the Gorbachev visit. As in the case of Hu Yaobang's death, they were using the occasion to bring attention to their cause. Dobbs in the Washington Post quoted a student protester from Beijing Medical College: "Gorbachev's visit is not important, it just gives us a chance to pressure the

government."[21] And Kristof in the New York Times said: "Mr. Gorbachev is less the inspiration for this movement than an opportunity to flaunt its demands in a way the leadership cannot ignore."[22]

There was no coverage, prior to the crackdown, of the attitudes of the country's peasant majority. Although some rural people came into the city and participated in the late demonstrations with banners proclaiming their peasant status, this was not generally reported. Coverage of the peasants, of course, would have cost at least a full day's diversion from Beijing for a reporter or a camera crew, and it was generally attempted only after the stories in the city began to dry up.

One rural foray produced an effective feature on the CBS Evening News on May 15, the day Gorbachev arrived in China. Charles Kuralt centered the program on a former Red Guard, now a reporter, who went back to the village he had bullied during the Cultural Revolution and chatted with a peasant woman who admitted she'd had a crush on him back then. Kuralt concluded that the peasants still "want survival, not more," but China's journalists now "think for themselves." The only reference to the movement was parenthetical but telling: the journalist had joined a march for press freedom.

Part of the problem with taking a camera to the countryside was that peasants remained more guarded in their

responses than most of the students and citizens in the square. But in hindsight, in a nation where 75 percent of the people live in the countryside, the implications for success or failure of the democracy movement of a role for rural China should have received more attention in April and May from the media than it did.

13. ZHAO ZIYANG'S REVELATION

For many Chinese, the power struggle emerged into public view on May 17, when Zhao told visiting Soviet President Gorbachev--and, through the media, the world--that senior leader Deng had been secretly designated China's "helmsman." Zhao was placing the responsibility for China's problems in Deng's lap, and perhaps challenging his mentor for control of the Communist Party and the country.

American television in our sample did not report on or carry the Zhao remark (although it was available from CCTV footage), which was a serious omission. Nor did the New York Times catch the significance of what it called Zhao's "mysterious" revelation that Deng had been designated "helmsman." Two days before, it ran a major story on the internal struggle. The front page headline announced "CHINA PARTY CHIEF APPEARS TO GAIN IN POWER STRUGGLE," and "PROTESTS DEEPEN DEBATE." The story on the political struggle topped the start of the student hunger strike,

which was not mentioned until the jump. The information was attributed to "three Chinese familiar with" the results of a special Politburo meeting which, they said, took place earlier in the week and endorsed Zhao's moderate line towards the students. A close reading of the story suggests that it came from pro-Zhao officials, who provided a misleading impression of Zhao's actual political position.

The day before Zhao spoke, Southerland in the Post said "the Chinese leadership may be divided and confused about what course to take with the students," according to "observers." The following day, Southerland homed in on the "political crisis" and reported Zhao's revelation. "One interpretation, offered by analysts here," he wrote, "is that Zhao was attempting to absolve himself of responsibility for the hard line the party took toward the students...[and] effectively saying 'Deng did it.'" This was a penetrating assessment. Southerland, exercising extra caution, chose to add that other analysts interpreted the remark as a defense of Deng.

Many Chinese appeared to assume the first analysis was correct, because the number of banners and chants targeting Deng increased dramatically right after Zhao's televised remarks. The following day, on May 18, Southerland in the Post presented an analysis based on diplomatic sources of the impact the protests might have on "the careers of a number of top officials." On May 19, the final day before

the open eruption of the power struggle, he suggested that the conflict between Li and Zhao was a factor behind the "near-paralysis" in government response to the movement. Finally the press was effectively zeroing in on conflicts within the Chinese government.

Holley in the Los Angeles Times also grasped the significance of the Zhao statement. He noted on May 17 that "the full implications of Zhao's remarks about Deng and why he chose to make them are not clear. But one effect of his statement would be to remind everyone that Deng had been the ultimate authority responsible both for China's generally successful economic reforms of the past decade and for the various shortcomings that so many protesters are now angry about." On May 19, just before the power struggle surfaced, Holley led his front page story with the closest approach to what was about to happen. "Crisis engulfed China on Thursday as the nation's leaders appeared split over whether to use the army to put down massive demonstrations demanding that senior leader Deng Xiaoping step down," the lead said.*

On May 17, ABC's Jim Laurie reported a tip that China's leaders were meeting and have a "problem," without

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*Holley recalled later that this story came in part from a man he'd met several times on the square. "He never told me his name. I never knew in detail what work he did. His comments about what was going on...proved to be accurate several times. On the night of May 18, I bumped into him again in the square and we talked about the splits that existed in the army...."

suggesting its nature, and the same day John Sheahan of CBS reported, a bit more substantially, that China's "leaders now realize they have to end this. The Party is split. The Army refuses to use force. There is a split that can result in a shakeup at the top." Several days earlier, when the students began their hunger strike in the square, CNN's Chinoy reported that China's rulers were "deeply divided" on how to respond. These were the fairly general warnings television viewers got in advance of the power shift that surfaced on May 19.

On television specials--Nightline, 60 Minutes, 48 Hours--where sinologists put in guest appearances, none of these specialists told viewers of the internal power struggle. The case of Bette Bao Lord suggests that television had access to more than was reported, but could not use it because there were no pictures attached. Lord was working for CBS and provided it with inside information that CBS producer Kathy Sciere confirmed was not always used by CBS. "'It's inside baseball, it's too inside politics,' a senior producer would say. 'What are you going to do for pictures?'" (A similar dilemma would occur for CBS when Deng made a major speech on June 9 which outlined the preparations for and rationale of the June 4 crackdown. "We never really did anything with it," producer Kathy Sciere said. "It was hard to sell as a story.")

Thus while some print reporters covered the power struggle, television did so less well. It could be said that given the torrent of news on May 17, it was a small miracle that any media caught the significance of Zhao's challenge to Deng. Bennett of the Wall Street Journal, defending the journalists, said, "The stuff on what happened between Zhao and Deng is murky, even today. In hindsight, sure, it's clear there was a struggle and Zhao challenged Deng and lost. But in China, all is so couched, so murky, I'm not sure what a responsible journalist could have made of it at that point [on May 17]. The power struggle came out in little teeny pieces--there was no way to get at it at the time." And Bennett added a related point which no doubt weighed heavily: "The story is the crowd. The story takes over."

14. RADICALIZATION, BROADENING OF THE MOVEMENT

Much of the print coverage of the summit week stressed Chinese government offers of reform. The New York Times's three-column headline on May 17, after announcing the normalization of Sino-Soviet relations, added "BEIJING PLEDGES DEMOCRACY." The story played up "a startling call for more democracy and human rights" by Li Peng. The Los Angeles Times led the paper that day with a two-column head saying "China Vows More Democracy in Bid to Quell Protests."

The story emphasized a statement by Zhao pledging reforms and affirming "the students' patriotic spirit." The AP lead was similar. The story summary on May 16 said "Party Chief Promises Steps to Democracy."

In one sense, all this did turn out in retrospect to be just another verbal offer, never tested, but it was the high point of the government's attempt to accommodate the movement. Some analysts later said that if the student leaders on the square had responded positively, Zhao might have been strengthened at the showdown meeting of the Politburo standing committee the next day, during which he was outvoted and his struggle for power was ultimately lost.

Because the promise to pursue reform was verbal and not accompanied by pictures, it was not highlighted by most of television. CBS led its broadcast with the offer, but did it briefly in a voiceover by anchorman Dan Rather, without specific footage, and it was lost in the vivid images projected both by the Gorbachev meetings with Chinese leaders and the emotional outpouring of Chinese citizens' support of the student hunger strikers. The fault here lies more, it seems, with the television medium itself than the journalists who were using it.

Time and the newspapers explained well the significance of the outpouring of citizen support to back up the students. A "people's movement" extending well beyond the ranks of students emerged, increasingly confrontational in

hue, with calls for the ouster of Premier Li and senior leader Deng. ABC highlighted, on May 17, research scholar Yan Jiaqi's proclamation calling Deng "a dictator, an emperor without a crown, old and senile." "The demonstration today," wrote Kristof in the New York Times on May 17, right on deadline, "was

> the realization of one of the Government's worst nightmares--organized worker participation in what began as student protests. Furthermore, the workers included not only auto mechanics and railroad employees, but also staff members of some of China's most respected and sensitive institutions. Among the thousands of 'work units' that paraded through the capital were organized groups representing pillars of the establishment like the People's Liberation Army, the Foreign Ministry, the Central People's Broadcasting Station, People's Daily and even the cadre school of the Communist Party Central Committee.... Many said their bosses did not object when they painted banners and marched out the door."

Southerland in the Post highlighted the increasingly confrontational tone of the protesters in his May 17 article:

> "Meanwhile, criticism by the demonstrators of China's top leader, Deng Xiaoping, 84, appeared to be growing. A banner carried by workers onto Tiananmen Square read 'Deng Xiaoping, when people are past 80 years old, they get muddleheaded.' Another banner read 'Xiaoping, come out and talk.' But perhaps the boldest protest banner was one hung from the Academy of Social Sciences building on the city's main east-west boulevard. Referring to students who are on a hunger strike in Tiananmen Square, the banner proclaimed: 'The students are starving. What are your children doing, Deng Xiaoping?'"

The quotation of this poster, with its reference to corruption among children of high party officials, brought the resentments harbored by the demonstrators to life.

As the weeks went by the student demands changed. Southerland of the Post wrote on May 18, "Hu Yaobang is now barely mentioned as the protests enter their second month." Other names were found on the banners and posters. On May 18 the New York Times ran with the headline "Crowds in Street Ask Deng's Ouster," and stated in the third paragraph of the story, "[T]he crowds this morning seemed at least as militant as those on Wednesday, and many people said they would be satisfied only with the removal of the country's senior leader, Deng Xiaoping, or Prime Minister Li Peng."

On May 18, the Los Angeles Times also highlighted this radicalization, running the headline "Massive Beijing Protest Demands Leaders Quit" and quoting a student announcement over a Tiananmen Square loudspeaker as saying, "We demand that Deng Xiaoping, Li Peng, old people and those among the young who are incapable should immediately resign." CBS, though slower to recognize earlier criticism of Li and Deng, on May 18 effectively captured the changing nature of student demands when Dan Rather remarked, "Anger is up. Talk of compromise is out. Talk that Deng Xiaoping himself must go, but even more talk that his second man, Li Peng, has to get out."

The China reports by the American media at the height of the movement were colored by the world-wide sense of the disintegration of the Communist world. They also seemed to be in the tradition of American reformism's approach to

China--just as were the later reports of the collapse of the movement and the loss of hope. The Los Angeles Times reported on May 21 that "[t]he gloomy perception that China is doomed to stagnate amid poverty and autocracy...suddenly seems to have been replaced by a giddy optimism that democracy may finally be at hand...now, for the first time, people have shown that they too have power." Had the Chinese people at last discovered that they had the power to change things, to alter the power structure of their country?

Those who wrote in this vein may or may not have realized that such ideas had been expressed time and again by American observers since the nineteenth century. History, once more, seemed to be marching upward and forward.

15. THE SHAPING OF CHINESE OPINIONS

The Politburo member in charge of propaganda, Hu Qili (later purged) informed Chinese media managers (on May 6) that they could report what was happening on the streets of Beijing. It was only on May 17, however, that the full import of this media signal became visible, and, given the sympathy that had built up for the hunger strikers, this transformed what had been student demonstrations into a mass

movement embracing various urban social elements all across China.*

The eight American news organizations in our study all made reference to the "window of freedom" the Chinese media enjoyed.** But they did not emphasize that this press freedom spread word of the demonstrations, not only in Beijing but throughout China, and created the exciting sense that it was safe to participate in and support them.***

Two foreign news organizations exercised influence upon Chinese public opinion. The Voice of America and the British Broadcasting Company, both of whose news reports reached China in English and Chinese, were closely heeded by the Chinese demonstrators (CNN was available in major hotels, where 90 percent of its audience were foreign travelers). The Chinese government constantly referred to the ubiquitous Voice of America as the "Voice of Rumor" and claimed it was actively trying to overthrow the government,

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*This two-week unleashing of the Chinese media and its impact have been traced in a previous paper of the Joan Shorenstein Barone Center on The Press, Politics and Public Policy--"'Lies in Ink, Truth in Blood': The Role and Impact of the Chinese Media During the Beijing Spring of '89," by Linda Jakobson.

**This "window of freedom" was explored by Michael J. Berlin, who was in Beijing during the spring, in an article in the Washington Journalism Review, September 1989.

***The only hint of the impact that Chinese media freedom was having was a telling phrase uttered by Ted Koppel on "Nightline" on May 17, after it was noted that Chinese television was showing the student side of the story. "Can you imagine what the impact may be in some remote provinces?" Koppel asked.

and some American newspapers in our sample did note the popularity of the news coverage by the Voice of America quite early on. On May 9, WuDunn wrote in the New York Times of the Voice of America's emerging role as the main source of alternative news in China. She described "students huddling around posters that report the latest Voice bulletins" and "hundreds of students crowded around a dormitory window listening to a dispatch." She identified the Chinese audience as "some 60 million listeners" and said it seemed "to have a greater effect on local politics than do China's own news organizations."

Television covered the Voice of America's role in China after its impact had been felt--once martial law was in effect. On May 22, The CBS Evening News ran a segment in which Barry Peterson interviewed Voice of America journalist Al Pessin, who admitted that he was basically ignoring martial law restrictions, and stated that the Chinese government was jamming three out of the five Voice of America frequencies. The next day, May 23, CBS reported President Bush asking China to stop jamming the Voice of America broadcasts. Then, on May 24, ABC reported that the Voice of America was not being jammed. But none of the media pushed home to Americans the huge impact--on urban China in particular--of VOA and BBC broadcasts.

At times heavy emotion crept into network coverage, and seldom more so than in a long, live standup in Tiananmen

Square on May 18 on the primetime CBS program "48 hours." Dan Rather and Charles Kuralt analyzed the movement, and Kuralt concluded that "it sends a chill down your spine." Rather wrapped up by saying: "What will these times bring? More turmoil? Very likely. More freedom and democracy? Maybe. There is little doubt this is a turning point for China and for world Communism.... It could well be a new people's revolution...ending the past and opening the future...."

Government leaders met students three times in the third week of May, and the CCTV coverage (picked up by the networks) offered the possibility of showing the government in a less negative light than usual--the leaders smiling, expressing concern for the health of hunger strikers, shaking hands, signing autographs. The footage actually selected by the networks in our sample, however, which aired on May 18 and May 19, generally showed the leaders in a negative light.

The cockiness of the students, especially Wuer Kaixi, the student of education at Beijing Normal College who was of Uighur nationality, was shown, but Li Peng's viewpoint was not reflected (he did express sympathy for the students' goals and promise to take their views into account). The picture of Wuer fainting at the end of the confrontation had the effect of establishing sympathy for him. The footage on Ted Koppel's Nightline show was wholly negative in its

depiction of the government. Li was shown in the Great Hall, his face reflecting anger, saying only that the demonstrations were creating anarchy.

Yet, in defense of television, the film of the dialogue exhibited the special capabilities of visual journalism. The emotions conveyed on the faces of key participants were a true guide to where the crisis was heading. As sinologist Rod MacFarquhar said, "The choice of images was prescient. Students looking cocky. Li Peng looking angry--these were the ingredients of the coming phase."

The print coverage of the final meetings between Chinese leaders and students gave a less intransigent picture of the government than television. Southerland, in the Post on May 18, noted that Zhao was "conciliatory" in his remarks to hunger strikers at a hospital. In the New York Times, the next day, Kristof said the government "capitulated" to a student demand by holding a televised meeting between Li and students in the Great Hall. He spoke of the visit by Li and Zhao to the square as "another gesture of conciliation."* These were fair judgments in the context of the time.

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*Kristof wrote that "[t]he televised discussion, while almost universally regarded by the students as unsatisfactory, would have been unthinkable just a week or two ago." He quoted Li: "We have to safeguard peoples' property and our students' lives. We have to safeguard our factories. We have to defend our socialist system." Kristof added: "The sharp exchanges were perhaps the first time that a Chinese leader has been subjected to the public humiliations that politicians regularly endure in the West."

16. PROTESTS OUTSIDE BEIJING

While the demonstrations reached their peak in Beijing during the week of the Gorbachev visit, they continued to escalate to new heights in dozens of cities all around China--helped by Chinese media reporting of Beijing events--even after martial law was declared in the capital. Charles Sylvester, who was American consul-general in Shanghai and saw classified intelligence reports monitoring events throughout China, estimated that there was a protest of some type at some time in virtually every town in China that had a university, and many that did not. The journalists who covered Beijing and their editors recognized that coverage of activity outside Beijing was incomplete. Several, such as New York Times foreign editor Bernard Gwertzman and Washington Post assistant foreign editor Valerie Strauss, pointed to that gap as one of their major regrets. Just as New York and Washington are not the United States, so Shanghai and Beijing are not China.

Sylvester made the point that the intermittent pattern of demonstrations in Shanghai and nearby cities (such as Hangzhou and Nanjing) was far different from the style of Beijing, where students established a permanent presence in the fixed, famous location of Tiananmen Square, staged a hunger strike, and were joined by other elements of society. Most news organizations covered some events in Shanghai.

All television networks had footage and correspondents from Shanghai on May 18 and 19, the days Gorbachev and the United States Navy were in town. ABC and CBS reported on the protests in Shanghai for a time after that. Time and the three newspapers had periodic reports from Shanghai.

In the days after martial law was declared, some journalists got good results from visits to cities outside Beijing, where protests were escalating. Among the cities reported on were Xiamen, Wuhan, Guangzhou (Canton), Guilin and Chengdu. Robert Pear of the New York Times, out of Washington on May 23, used the daily China report of the Federal Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), the CIA-produced compendium of daily radio broadcasts from selected Chinese media, including provincial newspapers and radio stations. These stories served as an adequate summary of events outside the capital--a trifle dry, but usable with a little effort.[23]

There were secondhand sources as well, such as diplomatic observers in consulates in several key cities in China, which were sporadically tapped. Western students or "foreign experts"--most of them university teachers--could have been tracked down by phone much more than they were (lists of numbers were available from the Fulbright office or the office of any other major exchange program).

Feyer of the New York Times said in retrospect, "We probably should have sent more reporters in before we did.

Nick and Sheryl were tireless...but there were angles that were not covered sufficiently because they were only two people...." We agree. Events outside Beijing required reinforcements that for the most part simply were not there.

17. THE GOVERNMENT READIES A RESPONSE

A number of our sample had made periodic reference to the Chinese government's fear of the emergence of an independent workers' union, akin to Solidarity in Poland. But when such a union actually emerged, on May 19, virtually all the journalists were too busy with other breaking stories--and with the reactions of the students to them--to cover the phenomenon fully. The development was mentioned in the newspapers and by the Associated Press, but there was no substantive discussion of the union and its significance until ten days later.

Before May 19 when Li Peng announced that government troops were being called into Beijing, the fact of government restraint (for whatever reason), and the reminder that it was exceptional in the Chinese context, was reported insightfully in six of the eight media organizations we surveyed, but less so in the evening news reports of the two major broadcast networks in our study, ABC and CBS. On May 14, CBS noted that the police "again did not move" against the students, but made the assumption that the only thing

stopping them was the presence of large crowds of citizens on Tiananmen Square. Next day, ABC's Jim Laurie commented that it would be "hard to see Gorbachev let Red Square be taken over by dissidents," a grudging reference to the forbearance of the Chinese government. An ABC reference to student forbearance included the interesting information (from John Laurence on May 17) that some of them derived their tactics from Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi.

From the beginning of its intensive summit coverage, Cable News Network gave emphasis to "the government's conciliatory approach and relaxed attitude" toward the movement. Chinoy noted on May 14 that "the government isn't enforcing its ban" on people in the square. A China specialist, Jonathan Pollack, was brought on to note (on May 18) how unexpected this was. Even as the plug was being pulled on its live satellite transmission from Beijing on May 19 (May 20 in China), Chinoy summarized the sequence of events and noted that "until this [the declaration of martial law] the government adopted a moderate line." CNN also emphasized to a greater extent than the other television networks the "peaceful" nature of the protests.

All five print media joined CNN in mentioning the relative restraint shown by the authorities. Southerland, in the May 16 Post, wrote that "apart from its plaintive public appeals...the government seems to have run out of

ideas on how to deal with the students and to have given up any pretense of trying to control the protests. It also appears unlikely that the authorities will attempt to use force to break the student movement as they had threatened." The AP, Los Angeles Times and Post all noted on May 17 that Zhao Ziyang had promised there would be no retribution for the demonstrations. Southerland called it "yet another effort to defuse the situation."

Between April 27 and May 19 the media did not convey much of the underlying sense of danger to the pro-democracy movement. One reason was that between the People's Daily editorial of April 26 and the meeting of student leaders with Li Peng in the Great Hall of the People on May 18, there were no overt threats by the Chinese Party or government; the threatening words simply were not there on a daily basis to be reported.

18. RUMORS, WAITING

A spate of rumors from all quarters began to flow throughout the city of Beijing. Reporters became dependent on their ability to select the kernel of truth and discard the chaff, as they realized the story was shifting from what was happening before their eyes to the events taking place unannounced, behind the crimson walls of official compounds. Again the government seemed to have fallen mute. Just as

there had been silence at the very beginning of the movement, from April 15 until April 25, and during most of the Sino-Soviet summit (May 15-18), in the days immediately following the imposition of martial law (May 20-26) there was no government voice, only rumor. Normally in China the domestic media can be used as a yardstick for defining orthodoxy at times when the government is silent. But, as Linda Jakobson showed in her paper, from early May until after June 4 the media, even the usual voices of government--People's Daily, Xinhua and CCTV--could not be relied upon to articulate the orthodox policy and signal the dominant faction.

The first rumors, apparently spread by students with relatives in the army, were that soldiers were about to be brought in to clear Tiananmen Square, but that some officers, including the commander of the 38th Army, had refused to follow orders to use force because their children were among the hunger strikers. As a result, the troops to be used would come from the 27th and 28th Armies, based further from Beijing. All eight of the news organizations in our sample used this story, with varying embellishments, before Li Peng's May 19 announcement of troop movements (ABC, CBS, AP, the Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times) or afterwards (CNN, the New York Times, Time).

Clearly, there was some basis for the story, but it is still not clear how much was fact and how much speculation.

The main problem was that from that moment on most reporters assumed the 38th was the "good" army and the 27th the "bad" army. This led to unjustified conclusions later, on the night of June 3-4 and in the days that followed, when troops who fired at citizens were presumed to be from the 27th and troops who did not were defined as elements of the 38th or its "allies." In fact, after the removal of the commander of the 38th army, the latter troops were to prove among the most murderous of any of the armies.

After the declaration of martial law on May 20, a cloud of possible violence hung over Beijing, yet day after day the "rain" did not come. All eight of the United States news organizations spoke of the intense but violence-free activities, including the extraordinary debates among students, citizens of Beijing, and the officers and rank and file of the army.

CBS reported on May 19 that many of the troops only made "half-hearted" attempts to reach Tiananmen Square. Dan Rather, amidst his confrontation with the satellite plug-pullers, noted that "the army and the supporters of the protesters have engaged in tremendous restraint," especially, he said, in contrast to the violence between troops and demonstrators common in South Korea. An ABC camera showed a soldier in a truck, blocked by a crowd of civilians, saying "the student movement is positive." A CBS camera showed a woman lecturing cowering soldiers in a

truck. All this made for riveting television. "We absolutely won't repress the people," an officer told a Beijing crowd on May 20, according to an article by WuDunn in the New York Times on May 21. "And then the soldiers, so moved that several were crying quietly, drove back the way they had come," she wrote.

"There are growing suspicions," Kristof wrote the following day, "that the army's slowness has more to do with its own reluctance than with Prime Minister Li [Peng]'s." All eight news organizations in the sample took this reasoning a step further on May 21, 22 and 23, with stories about a letter signed by 100 active army officers and a similar one signed by seven prominent retired generals and marshals that was sent to People's Daily and leaked by the students to the foreign media. The letters insisted that the army "must not suppress the people and it absolutely cannot open fire upon the people." To prevent an incident, "troops must not enter the city," they said. These military petitions, reported promptly and accurately, were later widely concluded to be authentic.

Both AP and ABC were caught when they published and aired reports based on a rumor that police had emerged from the Great Hall of the People on May 20 (the evening of May 19 in the United States) and were clubbing protesters in

Tiananmen Square.* This turned out to be untrue. For the most part, however, the instances in which force was used during the period between May 19 and June 3 were reported accurately and were not hyped. CBS showed some footage of pushing and clubbing by truncheon-wielding police who emerged from a bus on May 20, and a bloodied Beijinger displaying his wounds to the camera. Two days later there were reports of a clash in the suburb of Fengtai, which all of the media in the sample reported in context.

Four of the five print media (AP and the three newspapers) offered sidebars on May 20 or 21 on the army's role in China, each with an insightful analysis of the past and implications for the future. Time magazine caught up during the second week of martial law, in its issue dated June 5. Unfortunately, television did not offer such probing of the nature of the Chinese military.

The reports by CBS and CNN about the Chinese decision to cut off live satellite broadcasts through network-owned dishes were by their nature confrontational. They showed the government clamping down on coverage of repression. Indeed, the Chinese government was doing just that. Yet in fact, not all channels for reporting were cut off. And the permit given by China to CBS and CNN for the use of their

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*ABC's James Walker, reporting live over a telephone hookup at the start of the television show, said that "right now the square is a battleground. Police are clubbing students, bloodying their faces."

own satellite dishes had been limited to the week of the Gorbachev visit, which meant that the Chinese authorities had some contractual justification for "pulling the plug" on the use of the private satellite dishes.

All networks had brought in standard cameras and assorted sound and light gear. Field crews routinely used walkie-talkies to communicate with one another and with the network at its hotel. After May 19, when satellite communication was cut, CNN flew in five "mini-cams." It used cellular phones for voice feeds direct from Tiananmen Square to Atlanta (via the Beijing telephone system, which had installed cellular phone capacity specifically for the summit and left it in place afterwards). The satellite cutoff required television to resort to what it regarded as archaic technology--sending video cassettes out of the country with "pigeons" (airline passengers who were heading to a destination that had a working satellite, such as Tokyo or Hong Kong.)

Print media made effective use of some of the technology available to television, in particular walkie-talkies (for communication within Beijing) and cellular telephones (for impromptu conversations with home offices, or late filing).

19. REPORTS OF A POWER STRUGGLE

Rumors of Zhao Ziyang's fall surfaced when the Party chief was ostentatiously absent from the meeting on May 19 at which Li Peng--speaking for the Party--announced the dispatch of troops to Beijing. From this point on, the political struggle became the focus of foreign media coverage.

Some sinologists said in retrospect that the struggle was over by May 17, when the Standing Committee of the Politburo was said to have voted down Zhao's proposals for compromise with the protest movement. Many said the struggle ended by May 19. A few believed Zhao's side had a chance to reverse the verdict in the week after May 19, but the evidence was not yet in. In his book, Almost a Revolution,[24] now-exiled student leader Shen Tong says he and his colleagues were aware of the results of the Standing Committee meeting of May 17 within hours of the event, but there was no indication that such news was conveyed to foreign journalists.

In the days immediately following the imposition of martial law, when there was no government voice, perhaps the most successful media manipulators on the Beijing scene were Zhao's supporters, who managed to convince the foreign press corps (and many educated Chinese as well) that their man was

winning the power struggle. Virtually all the sources available to the media were on the "reformist" side.

Reports that Zhao might come back appear to have involved wishful thinking by some Chinese sources who were relied upon by foreign journalists. It is true that forty members of the National People's Congress actually did petition for an emergency session to consider revoking the martial law edict. And there was no doubt that some government officials were active in undermining Li's authority, because official documents were being leaked.

On the other hand, some of the other "signs" of Zhao's resurrection resulted from a poor reading of clues. Especially shaky was the evidence drawn from a reading of Beijing media. There was too much ad hoc Chinese media defiance for dependence on their signals any longer to be prudent. When satellite service was briefly restored for foreign networks, this too was taken as a sign of Li Peng's weakening grip on power. It is possible this was the case, but it does not seem likely. Street rumors (such as the resignation of Deng) were not much different from the inside information purveyed by pro-Zhao sources, and some journalists failed to distinguish between the two.

Seven of the eight United States news organizations in our sample reported a drive to restore Zhao (Time magazine was saved by its deadline, and covered it retrospectively). The Associated Press ran with a story saying there "were

signs [Li Peng] might be losing a power struggle with liberals in the leadership."[25] It surprisingly reported a Hong Kong radio rumor that the Politburo had decided to strip Li of the premiership, and that Zhao would resume his duties. It also found, in Washington, a "senior United States official specializing in Asian affairs," who was quoted as saying "it's clear Li's out." By May 26, AP was back to the orthodoxy that "[h]ardliners moved to tighten their control of China after [Zhao] was stripped of his power and placed under house arrest." There was no attribution.[26]

The New York Times on May 24 ran with the ill-based story that "there were signs that [Zhao]...might be making a comeback." The pro-Zhao sign was that the Chinese media merely identified Zhao in his formal role as General Secretary of the Party. And the anti-Li sign was a Xinhua story that reported demonstrations in which an "overwhelming majority" of the slogans called for Li's resignation. The Times led the next day with "conflicting signs and rumors," plus "indications" that Zhao "might be making a comeback." The signs and indications were newspaper accounts, plus the cancellation, once again, of live satellite broadcasts. Finally, on May 26, Li appeared on television, and the Times

said "at least for now he [Li] is gaining in the power struggle."*

Southerland ended the agony more quickly. On May 24 he wrote of "new signs that Premier Li Peng was losing a power struggle to [Zhao]." His signs also turned out to be Chinese media stories. But perhaps because he filed later in the day than Kristof did, Southerland was able to report on May 25 that "participants in recent high-level Communist Party meetings in Beijing have turned against [Zhao] and endorsed a proposal for his eventual ouster, well-informed Chinese sources said today."

Holley in the Los Angeles Times, usually cautious, went overboard for Zhao on May 24, leading with the report that "[e]mbattled Chinese Premier Li Peng, unable to enforce a four-day-old declaration of martial law in Beijing, stood Tuesday on the verge of losing power." Again, history's verdict is not yet in and it is just possible Li Peng suffered a short-term loss of power, but convincing evidence for such an occurrence was not cited in Holley's story. The story played up the Hong Kong report of a Politburo decision to oust Li, and noted that while it could not be confirmed "there was strong evidence that Li cannot remain in power." The evidence turned out to be the Chinese press, plus that mysterious senior American official specializing in Asian affairs. After a day of treading water, the Los Angeles

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*The stories were all by Kristof.

Times put rumor to rest on May 26 with a more cautiously worded lead: "Senior Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping and Premier Li Peng, having marshaled overwhelming military superiority in the Beijing area, appeared this morning to have won a power struggle with Communist Party chief Zhao Ziyang and other reformist leaders."*

Television, in this instance, stayed with the students for the most part and hung back from calling a winner in the power sweepstakes until it was clear that Li was home free. ABC came closest to the brink by reporting on May 23 that the "students appear to be winning," but on the same broadcast, John Laurence reported that "the internal struggle is not yet decided." Mark Litke, in one of the more perceptive comments on the flow of rumor, noted on May 24 that the Chinese media were reporting more freely again after the clampdown, "indicating that those in control of the media side with the liberals." This was an appropriate way to look at the media "hints," and better than assuming that the media reflected power realities.

CBS teetered on the brink of commitment on May 23, reporting "growing indications that Li is on the way out" and that this "could mean a Zhao comeback." Sheahan said Li's position was "very precarious." On May 24, CBS

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*The Los Angeles Times stories all began on page one. Karl Schoenberger shared the byline on May 25, and Jim Mann on May 26.

remained on the fence, but tilted towards Li with reports of army commanders endorsing martial law.

For CNN on May 23, footage of students chanting "Li Peng Step Down" was interpreted with some strain to be "among signs that the hardline Chinese leader may be losing a political power struggle." It also reported that "White House officials" said Politburo member Wan Li (then visiting North America) was "likely" to convene a People's Congress meeting to oust Li Peng. But the next night, CNN, too, saw "signs the hardliners may be winning the power struggle," among them the resumed ban on satellite broadcasts.

The main lesson in all this is that in a closed political system like China's, during a crisis in which the role of the foreign press is important, the elements within the government most likely to be talking to the press and influencing it are the liberal, cosmopolitan ones--sometimes peripheral to the center of power. Therefore, caution in using information from these sources is more important than ever.

20. COMPLICATIONS OF COVERAGE

Some diplomats said that during the Beijing Spring the reports filed by the journalists were as good as, and in some respects better than, those governmental observers were filing back to their foreign offices and intelligence

agencies. "As it began to break," an American intelligence analyst said in an interview, "government [intelligence] reports were more useful [than media reports] for linking up the pieces. But from late April until June 4, inside stuff was fed to the media in Hong Kong and Beijing, and media coverage was very good. It was right on stories, even close on internal and military stories."

Coverage of the decision-making process in China requires the sifting of rumor and the reading of tea leaves. Foreign media must depend on more expertise than most beats require and on inside sources which need lengthy and careful cultivation in this cautious society. Journalists are regarded by the Communist establishment as potential if not actual spies and as uncontrollable purveyors of public criticism that can damage relations and cause the loss of face.

The function of rumor is different in China from that in most cultures, though quite similar to that in other totalitarian societies. In a society where the normal channels of communication are tightly controlled by the ruling party and serve only to convey the concepts the party wishes the populace to see and hear, rumor is the traditional method of circulating information. For China-watchers, it must never be ignored, yet it cannot be taken at face value. A diplomat or journalist must ask the questions, "<u>who</u> spread this rumor, and <u>why</u> was it spread?"

The attitude at CNN was that rumors sweeping the square--such as word during the early martial law days (May 22-24) that Premier Li had resigned--should be reported as news because they were sweeping the square. Eason Jordan, who was in charge of CNN's international coverage, said CNN's correspondents "know we're on air 24 hours a day. But we don't put information on air that might be construed as irresponsible. Our correspondents were reporting what they were seeing. Chinoy was reporting information from sources, some of which some people might say was rumor. When rumor is that big a part of the story, you just have to say so. But we never billed rumor as fact."

But sinologist Harry Harding was critical of the CNN approach: "[I]t is the equivalent, in my view, of simply having newspaper reporters publish constant special editions of their raw notes." And many journalists in Beijing complained that CNN aired reports without discrimination--such as word that Li Peng had resigned, or that troops had invaded Beijing University--and because their editors heard the stories, they were forced to undertake wild goose chases to check rumors they would otherwise have ignored.

Jordan conceded that many media had to scramble to check out CNN reports, but said "that's part of the game. Still, they don't have the pressure of having to decide at that very moment, do you report it or not? We're faced with

that dilemma all the time and we don't have the luxury that they do of lots of time to check it out."

By contrast, Kristof in the New York Times explained the nature and function of rumors in China, and let the reader know that this was a social phenomenon, rather than a nugget of fact. Southerland, in the Washington Post, took a very different view from CNN. He either ignored rumors totally or reported them in a way that assessed their lack of credibility. We think this was the correct approach.

A complication was that in covering the China story, CNN became the basic source for other media,* for Congress, and for government officials. Had CNN recognized and accepted this role as a medium of record, it might have appropriately adopted the New York Times approach to rumor: Report it only when absolutely necessary, and only with guidelines for consumers about the quality of the information.

Students and workers in Tiananmen Square were often in possession of authentic documents revealing the inside workings of the Politburo. One such document, slipped to student leaders on May 21, copied by them and pasted on lampposts throughout central Beijing (including one just outside Zhongnanhai, the leadership compound), was the full, authentic text of a secret speech by President Yang

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*Several editors, including those at AP and the Washington Post, said that CNN was monitored in the newsroom throughout the crisis.

Shangkun.* Several reporters--including Holley of the Los Angeles Times and Ignatius of the Wall Street Journal--said that while working the square they met total strangers who provided them with accurate inside information on the power struggle inside Zhongnanhai. They never learned the names of their sources, and after June 4 they never laid eyes on them again.

The problem was that such sources provided information that came only from the liberal, or reformist, side of the Chinese political spectrum. These intellectuals, middle-level government officials, or young relatives of high Party officials were the ones who advocated the opening to the outside world. As a result, the inside information flow--documents, leaks, rumors--contained an intrinsic bias.

American reporters who go abroad, no matter how well backgrounded they are, often find that it requires a change of mindset to adapt to the dearth of official access and information they have come to depend on in the United States. China's decision-making processes are even more heavily insulated from public view than are those of most Marxist and Third World nations.

The best sources in China are those who have been cultivated over time, have become friends of the reporters

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*See Shen Tong, Almost A Revolution, page 303. Another authentic document, which reporters apparently missed but diplomats did not, was the Politburo's secret voting record.

(or diplomats) and only then begin to provide inside information. There is a mutual obligation component to friendships in China that exceeds that in the West. In the mind of a Chinese friend, information is a valued commodity in the network of mutual obligation, which may be worth (at some future time of need) an American visa for one's spouse, or entry into an American university for one's child. It cooks few potatoes to say that such obligations are ethical violations of journalistic norms, because they are part of the currency for obtaining information in China, sometimes the only way to get inside stories. The important points for the reading public are that all the salient facts of a story be included and that sources be from a variety of social strata and viewpoints.

After May 13 the hunger strikers made the ultimate decisions affecting the movement, through the hunger strike "headquarters," which was a body separate from the earlier city-wide coalition of independent campus organizations, and from the committee established to coordinate a dialogue with the government. Several times (on May 14, May 17 and finally on May 27) the hunger strikers rejected proposals by the leaders of the campus-based student groups (including Wang Dan and Wuer Kaixi) to negotiate with the government or to return to campus.* It was not until the last decision,

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*Cai Jinqing, one of the student leaders in the square, maintained at the Brandeis University conference on China, 9/16/89, that the shifting population of hunger strikers

on May 27, that most of the journalists in our sample became alert to this dynamic, the process of radicalization it entailed, and the increased prospect it foreshadowed of a violent climax to the crisis.

Southerland was generally attuned to divisions within the student leadership. The other media in the study caught up to the internecine squabbles only after martial law was declared and some of the more visible leaders, such as Wuer Kaixi, started talking about their exclusion from the core group of decision-makers in the square, at the end of May. Television did not deal with this issue until the very end. There was one reference by Sheahan on CBS on May 22. He said "students are now as factionalized as the government," but went no further. Fuller television reporting on the factionalism came only after May 27.

After the live-via-satellite transmissions were stopped on May 20 and the story of the power struggle faded five days later, most of the big-name television correspondents (including the anchors) left Beijing. As the crowds in Tiananmen Square dwindled in late May and early June, the networks began to reduce the scope of their coverage and their presence. Some of the television reporters who were to cover the June 3-4 violence (such as ABC's Jackie Judd and Kyle Gibson) arrived in China only a few days before.

"dominated the decision-making process. Many were deranged, uninformed and much less flexible [than we were] toward compromise."

It should be mentioned that conditions for journalists in the Beijing of this period were not easy. There was intense heat, torrential rain, limited transportation and communications facilities, the tension of not knowing what might happen next, occasional personal danger, and for many journalists only a few hours of sleep a day. Many news organizations (including the networks and the wires) staffed the square twenty-four hours a day from May 13 through June 3.

The Washington Post sent in two former China correspondents, Mathews and Michael Weisskopf, after martial law was declared. The New York Times added no staff until the following month. The Los Angeles Times backstopped Holley with Dan Williams from Jerusalem (who had China experience) and Karl Schoenberger from Tokyo (no China experience) in late May. Jim Mann, Holley's predecessor in Beijing, wrote some background articles from Washington and then went to Beijing in late May. Time flew some of its homebased China hands to Beijing and Shanghai. William Stewart operated out of Hong Kong. Beijing Bureau Chief Sandra Burton said that the consistency of the stories suffered because a different writer was assigned to the China files in New York City virtually every week, as a result of vacations and shifting assignments. The AP maintained its basic China team from the start of the summit through most of June.

As May gave way to June, the seven daily news organizations in the sample began to report mounting evidence of tension, fear and intimidation--an ominous atmosphere.* On CBS, Susan Spencer reported that "fewer ordinary people want to talk" because they fear reprisals. Jim Laurie of ABC said that workers had been threatened by their work units for leaving the job to go to the square. Jim Hoagland reported in the Post that intellectuals had been told "they are on a growing arrest list," and so "fear is still a major part of life here."

All eight of the media outlets in our study reported, at one point or other before June 3, that two hundred thousand to three hundred thousand troops had been brought from around the country to the outskirts of Beijing. The first news of arrests--eleven members of the Flying Tigers, a motorcycle group that served as messengers for the movement, and then three leaders of the independent workers' union--came from CNN, the Associated Press and the three newspapers at the very end of May.

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*Time magazine's one issue (the cover date was June 5) between the declaration of martial law and the explosion of violence carried fewer cues than other media did on the direction in which events were heading. It was locked into a cover story entitled "People Power," in which Mikhail Gorbachev opened a tumultuous session of the Soviet legislature and "[i]n China the forces for transformation bubble up from below," according to the teaser in the table of contents. The story did contain the triumph of Li Peng's faction and noted that two hundred and fifty thousand troops were "poised on the outskirts" of Beijing. But the overall tone was one of a city returning to normalcy, "amazingly lacking in tension throughout the week."

In retrospect, a number of China specialists and government officials complained that the media built up public expectations that the movement would succeed, making the violent crackdown all the more traumatic for Americans. "TV's role was emotional," said a senior government official. "The hot images reinforced a buildup of expectations that Beijing would end up the same way [as Manila and Seoul]. You were primed for another burst of democracy, and then WHAM! ... So suddenly Deng becomes the butcher of Beijing, and you lose policy flexibility."

Should news organizations have made more of a conscious effort to point out the danger of violence or the likelihood of a crackdown? Two contradictory trends had impressed themselves on reporters and editors. The first was that the threat of violence and repression loomed, and this was reported. But the second was that there were no certainties on what might happen next, and the movement had again and again exceeded expectations. The violence anticipated on May 19-20 never took place. The victory of Li, Deng, and Yang Shangkun, which looked inevitable on May 19, was clearly challenged by significant forces in Chinese society in the following days. And so the reporters, in balancing the rhetoric and imagery of hoped-for reforms against the underlying danger of repression, indeed hedged their bets, and rightly so, in fairness to the concrete realities before them.

The image of the "Goddess of Democracy," the statue erected by art students in Tiananmen Square at the eleventh hour of the movement's existence on May 30, probably outweighed the facts of troop presence in the American public's mind and may have eclipsed the recognition that a large set of perquisites have to be in place before a Communist regime is toppled and democracy arises in its place. If so, television is not at fault for transmitting vivid images, but it has a journalistic duty to provide context and analysis for those images.

"Television is getting a bad rap for being too emotional," said David Caravello of CBS. "I would be interested to see [if anyone] could separate our scripts from the pictures, because I think that sometimes the reaction of people had more to do with what they were seeing than rather what they were hearing. There was such a volume of material coming out of Beijing...it was the pictures people responded to more than our words." That indeed seems to be an intrinsic, and troubling, feature of television journalism.

21. THE ARMY ATTACKS

As Beijing held its breath, a peculiar incident took place. In the early morning hours of Saturday, June 3, several thousand seemingly untrained young soldiers were

sent unarmed towards Tiananmen Square. "Most of them [wore] white undershirts with their khaki uniform pants," Kristof reported in the New York Times of June 3, "[looking] distinctly unenthusiastic about their mission."

A new situation had arisen and with it a fresh challenge to media accuracy in covering a city exploding in scattered confrontations. As the scramble intensified to report how many died and where, sources were more subjective than ever and television's presence was arbitrary and limited. The media were captive to their weeks-long focus on Tiananmen Square as the physical embodiment of the democracy movement--and indeed, the great issue of the hour seemed to be the fate of the remnant of students huddled at the Monument to the People's Heroes in the heart of the square.

The first AP advisory on troops firing on crowds in Beijing moved at 10:39 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time on June 3 (11:39 p.m. in China). The death toll inched up from one to thirteen (in the eleventh lead at 1330 EDT) to thirty (in the third lead of the morning papers' cycle at 1527 EDT). The troops were said to be moving from the outskirts, to have reached the square, to be using tanks and to be opposed by crowds tossing Molotov cocktails. Then the second paragraph of a dispatch that moved at 1530 EDT said incorrectly, "Troops opened fire on people in the square. At least one person was shot in the back, another in the

head. Scores were wounded by gunshots and beatings." An hour later, the references to troops firing on people in the square dropped out of the AP copy. The stories included the negotiated evacuation of the last students clustered around the Monument to the People's Heroes. By 2032 EDT (9:30 a.m. Sunday in China) a Chinese doctor was quoted as estimating at least five hundred deaths.

CBS's first report, on June 3 (Sunday June 4 in China), said that troops and tanks had retaken the square, hundreds were killed, and "the battle is essentially lost." It offered a dramatic sound bite of correspondent Richard Roth being taken prisoner, with sounds of gunfire in the background before the cellular phone he was using went dead.*

On the night of June 3 (mid-morning June 4 in China), CNN's "Prime News" hour anchor Rick Moore in controlled language said that "government troops exploded into Tiananmen Square with tanks, bayonets, guns and clubs to face [students with] sticks and rocks." He reported forty-two to one hundred seventy-six deaths. Later he said that "soldiers came into the square and started shooting with no warning." A CNN producer, Donna Liu, was interviewed over a live telephone and relayed street rumors

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*Roth said later, at a forum sponsored by the Center for Communication in New York City, that his famous last words, which sounded over the phone like "Oh no! Oh no! Oh no!" (and were reported in print as such) were actually "I'll go! I'll go! I'll go!"

of three thousand deaths, and of tanks that rode over crowds of people, crushing them to death "on Tiananmen Square."

A problem for the networks was that there was virtually no footage available of soldiers in the act of killing civilians in the dark hours of June 3-4, though the fact of many such killings was beyond dispute. On the other hand there were many shots of civilians attacking armored personnel carriers and the troops that emerged from them. There were many shots of wounded civilians being rushed to medical treatment, and heartwrenching stills of dead bodies and devastated relatives at the hospitals.

A Spanish television crew that stayed with the last demonstrators until the end got footage of the evacuation of Tiananmen Square, and later of the column of evacuees being attacked well away from the square as they marched northwest towards the campuses. This film, used by ABC, included pictures of troops standing on the upper tier of the Monument to the People's Heroes at the center of the square, brandishing submachine guns and bayonets, with student demonstrators below them.

One striking shot of indiscriminate firing on civilians, played by all networks, was taken from a distance, in the dark, showing a column of troops and armored vehicles advancing along West Changan Avenue toward the square, firing at random down the avenue, clearly <u>not</u> in the air or into the ground, but straight ahead, at chest

level. Then the camera panned in the direction the bullets were flying, to show large numbers of civilians fleeing the troops, their backs turned. Some had fallen to the ground. Others were being helped up by members of the crowd. It was a short clip--less than fifteen seconds, but unforgettable.

The initial Post story by Southerland, in the late edition of the June 4 (Sunday) paper, spoke of scores and possibly hundreds of deaths, made clear that most of the bloodshed took place on the streets leading to the square, and reported the evacuation of the last group of students from Tiananmen Square itself.

The Los Angeles Times, with the latest deadline among the three newspapers in our survey, put the death toll as "at least 100...and perhaps many more." There was a report--false as it turned out--that a tank killed students trying to guard the "Goddess of Democracy" statue, attributed to "an American reporter [who] said he had been told by a Chinese eyewitness."

Kristof and WuDunn in the New York Times offered a coherent and error-free account of the attack and the mood of Beijing afterwards. There were references to violence against soldiers, as well as soldiers killing civilians, and no assertion was made of student deaths on the square itself.

Working against a deadline that would be luxurious for television and liberal for newspapers, but was tight for a

news magazine, Time (in its issue dated June 12) reported a toll of five hundred to two thousand six hundred and noted that soldiers had been killed too. The writers in New York used a few rhetorical flourishes, and erred in saying the fighting "spilled out of the Tiananmen area and into other Beijing neighborhoods"; the fighting began at some distance from the square and moved closer to it as the night progressed.

22. LOSSES, SOURCES, BEIJING'S ACCUSATIONS

In the second week of June, the Chinese media, once again under the censors' control, began to push their version of the June 4 events. The Chinese government challenged United States and other foreign media accounts of a massacre on Tiananmen Square as a complete fabrication. It said that troops moving into the city fired only after being attacked by rioters and in the process some onlookers died as well. It claimed that this took place on the streets leading to the square. It said that hundreds died, not thousands, mostly soldiers, and that no one was killed or run over in the square.[27]

A consensus has since developed among sinologists and reporters who covered the story that while some students may have been crushed in tents in the square by armored vehicles, no witnesses can be sure that this happened, most

students had by this time left the square, and that the total number of those who were killed in several isolated incidents on the square was small (a dozen to a score at most). Instead, the violence predominantly occurred outside the square itself.

It is also agreed that in some cases citizens initiated the violence and troops responded. But there is no question that the overwhelming bulk of the violence was committed by units of the People's Liberation Army. There were television images and written references to citizen violence in the initial accounts of virtually all of the eight news organizations we sampled--though it was defined almost wholly as reactive. Mathews of the Washington Post said: "We didn't make enough of a point that soldiers died too and parts of the crowd were real tough guys. One of the stories we missed was that lots of people out there that night were the Chinese equivalent of street gangs, out there to have fun and make trouble." Mathews wrote an op-ed page article on June 29 expressing this view.

There have been and will remain different estimates of the number of deaths on the streets of Beijing during the hours of darkness on June 3-4. In Time for June 19, with a June 10 deadline, the death toll in the "Tiananmen massacre" was raised from a range of five hundred to two thousand six hundred, in the previous week's issue, to five thousand, without attribution. By the July 3 issue, the number of

deaths was reduced to "many hundreds." Readers should have been given an explanation for this startling arithmetical adjustment.

Many observers accept the retrospective estimate by Kristof of the New York Times that the civilian death toll in Beijing on the night of June 3-4 was four hundred to eight hundred.[28] The American government "intelligence" estimate was initially three thousand--announced on background by Secretary of State James Baker in the days immediately after the event. But it was scaled back to between one thousand and fifteen hundred, a figure compiled in the fall of 1989 after an extensive secret inquiry conducted collectively by a group of military attachés from various Western nations stationed in Beijing.

According to four American government officials, who discussed their findings with us only on condition that they not be named in this report, the three thousand figure cited by Baker on June 5, coming from "U.S. intelligence," actually was an extrapolation of the twenty-six hundred figure released by the Chinese Red Cross, and was taken off the U.S. television news broadcasts, ABC and CNN in particular.

Some reporters continued to stand by the initial estimate of twenty-six hundred deaths by officials of the Chinese Red Cross. Others expressed the belief that this figure and other claims of ten thousand or more deaths, put

forward by partisan advocates of the protest movement (and at one point by the BBC), were greatly exaggerated and motivated by a desire to generate anger at the army and the government, both inside and outside China.

All eight news organizations in our sample, cautious in their initial reports on both the venue and number of deaths, were captured to varying degrees by false information on the toll that could have been avoided. But since the United States government, among others, was speaking of three thousand dead and naming the square as the location, and the Chinese Red Cross was speaking of 2600 dead, it is hard to blame the media for reporting such government statements. Even so, the basis for such estimates could have been analyzed more candidly with readers and viewers.

On June 10, ABC belittled Beijing's claims about June 4 and said that "in stunning contrast, this was the scene ABC cameras recorded in the square." The footage, however, showed the crowd attacking an armored personnel carrier, and bicycle carts carrying wounded--all on Changan Avenue, not on the square.

CNN, in a roundup of the events of June 3-4 on Monday, June 5, put together by Burton Jones in Atlanta, said: "The People's Army opened fire on thousands of students camped in the square." A student interviewed on camera said, "I'm sure many students were killed" as they left the square.

The footage accompanying this narrative mostly showed scenes outside the square, with some pictures of troops (not firing) at the Monument to the People's Heroes. The vehicles attacked by crowds (mostly non-students) were shown outside the square. Footage of soldiers dragging people off buses used as street barricades was also taken outside the square.

On June 6, AP relayed student "eyewitness" claims--not well-founded--that "hundreds of colleagues from the Academy of Fine Arts who were huddled around their 'Goddess of Democracy' statue in the square" were shot or crushed by tanks.

Time's issue dated June 19, which had a June 10 deadline, said the troops transformed "the Woodstock-like encampment of young students calling for democracy into the bloodiest killing ground in Communist China's history," thus overlooking dark moments of the Cultural Revolution.

A major problem for journalists was that the high emotion among Beijing citizens, together with a lack of any usable information from official sources, resulted in the media's receiving false accounts from Chinese sources on the streets. A vivid but false first-person account of the massacre in the square, by a student from Qinghua University, was run in the Outlook section of the Sunday Post of June 11, excerpted from the Hong Kong newspaper Wen Wei Pao. The New York Times also ran (a day after the Post)

this eyewitness account attributed to the Qinghua student. But unlike the Post, the Times ran an article by Kristof the next day debunking the story and quoting Chinese and Western witnesses as saying the events it described on the square "did not happen."*

The opinions and analyses of the specific events of June 4 by Chinese students within the United States were overplayed. Fox Butterfield, reporting for the New York Times from Boston, used stories from Chinese students who spoke of a massacre at the monument in which one thousand students were shot, bayonetted and burnt. But the sources had not been at the scene of the events.

There was a realization in the media some days after June 4 that exaggerations from Chinese sources had been passed on to the American public. On June 12, Holley and Daniel Williams in the Los Angeles Times published the first pruning back of the excessive claims. They said that most deaths--"hundreds"--occurred on streets away from the square as troops moved towards the square, and that "several dozen were shot and killed on Changan Avenue at the north side of the square." As for the students at the monument, most "and perhaps nearly all of them--were allowed to leave." Chinese "who claim to be" witnesses give "conflicting reports," and no foreigner saw the whole thing, they wrote. "It appears

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*Inexcusably there was no correction in the Post until August, when the paper did an article recapping the Beijing Spring.

that proof of the true figures [of dead] will never be obtained." This was a good summation of what was actually known.

Exaggerated descriptions of the killing of students on the square caught on for two reasons: they were generated by Chinese sources expressing outrage, and the media were susceptible because they were not on the square until dawn. There were less than a dozen non-Chinese who stayed in the square until dawn, and only one of our eight sample news organizations (the Associated Press) had a reporter there.

There were no photographers or camera crews from among the eight--Richard Roth and his cameraman of CBS stayed as long as they could, until they were arrested. Journalists were covering the action elsewhere that night, or filing the blockbuster story they had already witnessed. Some understandably concluded that the danger was too great. But unfortunately this dearth of journalistic witnesses permitted uncertainty as to the nature and extent of the violence within the square.

It might seem a Talmudic point to note that the overwhelming bulk of the violence was not in Tiananmen Square itself but in surrounding streets. Clearly, many Chinese participants and American press organizations felt the distinction was not worth making. "That's not the important issue," Shen Tong told us. "A lot of press was there, they know a lot of people died right in front of

them. Did he or she die on the west part of the Changan Avenue...or Tiananmen Square? For me, that's pointless and I wouldn't go on to argue about that."

Nate Polowetzky, who was in charge of AP foreign coverage, said AP's editors felt that "the use of the phrase 'Tiananmen Square' becomes a shorthand, more a symbolic thing, rather than a geographic location." He said, "The battle of Lexington didn't occur [only] in Lexington. I would not really feel guilty about [using the phrase] 'Tiananmen Square massacre.' It's close enough--it's symbolic." The nagging problem is that laxness of precision became a pretext for the Chinese government and some media critics to castigate the entire foreign press coverage of the event.

And beneath the Talmudic point lies a broader concern. Many journalists, editors and producers saw the movement as a "Tiananmen Square" movement, for this gave it a ready-made drama with a physical, visual locus, which made taking pictures and measuring support easier than in the reporting of dispersed demonstrations. Such an emphasis had the effect of mythologizing Tiananmen Square. It brought with it the tendency to neglect the movement in cities other than Beijing and the parts of the movement other than the student part based at Tiananmen Square. Thus the "Tiananmen Square" label, with which the media indelibly marked this historic series of events, is more than technically misleading. It

has provided a falsely narrow legacy for what was a widespread, decentralized, socially diverse movement.

23. INTENSIFIED COVERAGE

After the People's Liberation Army took over the streets of Beijing, the intensity of American media scrutiny of events grew, and both the already large print news hole allocated to the story and the proportion of the television news broadcasts devoted to China swelled. All but AP in our sample sent additional staff into China after June 4.

Ironically, just as reporters without extensive China experience began to play larger roles, Chinese sources began to dry up. More news was demanded, yet there was less being said--no official statements or appearances, and a populace increasingly disinclined to talk. Some outlets dealt heavily in rumors that proved unfounded: that Premier Li Peng had been shot in the leg by a guard at the Great Hall of the People; that Deng Xiaoping was hospitalized and either dying of prostate cancer, recovering from a stroke, or dead; that Zhao Ziyang was dead or was in south China; that Defense Minister Qin Jiwei had been ousted for being soft on the student movement; that student leader Wang Dan had been shot and bayonetted during the June 3-4 violence,

and that clashes between army units were occurring in the Western outskirts of Beijing.*

For the most part, the particularity of China meant that reporters with experience in covering the country did a better job in the rumor-sifting process, while the parachutists--even journalists familiar with emergency situations--tended to buy into some wildly unlikely rumors, and to bypass clues within other rumors that pointed toward news.

Cable News Network was vulnerable to rumor because it remained on the air, at this stage of the story, virtually 24 hours a day, doing much of its coverage live and unscripted. From the Atlanta headquarters, wire service reports were aired, with attribution but not much discrimination. They were discussed live with reporters in the field, who had to react to the claims without checking them out and usually without reflection.

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*Six of our eight news organizations reported the Deng rumors, but only two--AP and the Los Angeles Times--gave them credence. The others indicated that this was the type of wild rumor that was creating uncertainty in China, as Southerland put it in the Washington Post. One of the sources for the Deng rumor was the U.S. government.

Five of the eight sample news organizations reported the Li rumor but again, only AP and the Los Angeles Times gave it credence--by reporting it straight and attributing it to a Hong Kong newspaper.

Later in June, a Chinese student in Cambridge, Mass., claimed publicly that he had started the Li Peng rumor to force the Premier to disprove it by appearing in public (which he did on June 8), thereby showing himself to be the person in authority, which would assign to him responsibility for the June 3-4 violence.

Many foreign journalists, including "parachutists" and former China reporters who no longer had a network of sources available to them, were at the mercy of information obtained from embassies and "street" sources. Some diplomats in Beijing had good sources, especially those from Japan, Pakistan and other Asian nations with the closest ties to China. One problem was that there was no one available in the Chinese government to check them with. Another was that such information came with a spin that was often difficult for the parachutist to separate from the occasional useful nugget of fact.

After June 4, the Pentagon reporters of ABC and CBS spoke of the deployment of the army around Beijing, and the five print outlets offered stories on the military, some from Beijing and others from Pentagon or former China correspondents. CNN reporter Carl Rochelle explained the rise of the family of President Yang Shangkun as a military dynasty (but he reported one Yang too many, saying that China's president and the vice-president of the military commission were "related"; in fact, the two men were one). It was surprising that few of the specialists on the nightly specials that proliferated after June 4 discussed the army's role in politics, its past history of intervention, the background of troops and officers, or the political significance of a larger say by the army in Chinese public affairs.

24. "CIVIL WAR"

All eight of our sample were caught up, to a greater or lesser degree, by the overblown "civil war" story between June 5 and June 8. The civil war-related stories included accounts of clashes at the Nanyuan military airport south of Beijing and plans by the 38th Army to move into the city and fight the 27th Army, which was said to be the unit that perpetrated the violence on June 3-4. It was suggested that the 38th also would oust the hardliners and restore Zhao Ziyang.

AP reported on June 5 that the 38th Army was moving in "to end the killing and possibly drive the 27th from Beijing." The following day it said, "Beijing is...surrounded by armies said to oppose the harsh martial law crackdown, setting the stage for a possible battle." There was no attribution. CNN reported similarly and Rather led the CBS evening news broadcast on June 5 with the statement, "The specter of an all-out civil war hovered over the capital...."

On an ABC "Nightline" special on June 5, Kyle Gibson concluded a report on troop movements by saying "somewhere nearby there is a civil war about to begin." Chinese student Pei Minxin, interviewed from Harvard on the same program, was absolute: "Fighting will be inevitable." On ABC the next night the distinguished exiled journalist Liu

Binyan was equally definitive: "It is clear there is confrontation between two armies in Peking."*

The Los Angeles Times led the paper on June 6 with the statement that "China teetered this morning on the edge of civil war." There was no attribution. But a more suitably cautious story on the threat of civil war emerged from its Pentagon correspondent, John M. Broder, in the June 8 edition. He interviewed a Defense Department analyst who said the Chinese troops may be "jockeying and posturing," but the suggestion that the Chinese troops were positioned in ways that indicated they expected an attack from other army units was "all speculative. You can't tell from the deployments what their intentions are." The convoys that most other media saw as evidence of friction "could be replacements," the analyst noted. He said the reason for the skirmishing might be that the Chinese troops were just tired, nervous, stressed, unused to riot duty and unsure of the rules of engagement--when to fire and at what.

The Washington Post led on June 6 with the unattributed statement that "opposing armies maneuvered to confront each other...in a power struggle that raised the prospect of a civil war beginning in this capital." There was a sidebar on a tank unit taking up "defensive positions" against other

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*Liu had also said on Nightline on May 22 that "Chinese troops will not fire on the Chinese people" and the "downfall" of Li Peng "is inevitable" within ten hours to three days.

troops. On June 7, the Post reported negotiations among army units to "end civil strife." On June 8, a Western diplomat was quoted as saying, "You've got rival armies out there like dogs, baring their teeth and snarling at each other. But the moment must arrive when one overcomes the other through stratagem or war." By June 9, an "observer" was quoted as suggesting the severity of the split may have been overestimated.

Military and intelligence officials interviewed conceded that it was very difficult at the time to know whether or not the rumors were well founded. The stakes were high. One of the reasons for the emergency evacuation of foreign nationals from Beijing was the perceived danger that they could be engulfed in a civil war (the other, overriding, reason was the fear that foreigners would be targeted by Chinese authorities or angry soldiers).

Despite all the foreigners out on the streets on June 4, and all the firing at the apartments of the diplomatic compound near the Jianguomenwai traffic intersection three days later, no foreigners were killed and few were wounded throughout the crisis--a point the press hardly mentioned, no doubt because it was of secondary importance to the other news.

One administration official we interviewed maintained that the evacuation of Americans from all of China was ordered solely because of the exaggeration of the danger

conveyed by the media, especially CBS. He said that had it not been for the resultant public "hysteria," the evacuation order would have been limited to Beijing.

But others within the United States government disagreed. Said Mark Mohr of the State Department: "When you have over ten apartments [in the diplomatic quarter] taking 120 bullets, and two children almost get killed, you have to evacuate--it's kind of silly to debate it." Many Americans in Beijing in fact were complaining that they could not get out as fast as they wished and asking why the United States government was not doing more to help. "The embassy people that I spoke to," recalled Al Pessin of VOA, "were pretty ticked off that their families were played politics with because allegedly Jim Baker or George Bush didn't want to kick sand in Deng Xiaoping's face by pulling the people out and suggesting the situation was unstable."

The issue evidently was one between the State Department and the White House, with the former seeing the logic of an early evacuation and the latter, hyper-protective of the China relationship, inclined to blame the media rather than the Chinese troops for a perception of imminent danger to American lives in Beijing.

Blaming the media for the civil war rumors themselves is unfair, since most of the reports of skirmishing between Chinese military units were spread by Western military attachés and other diplomats. They were confirmed by

intelligence sources in Washington and announced publicly by the State Department spokeswoman, Margaret Tutwiler. The Australian air attaché was identified by reporters and government officials as one of the prime sources of rumors that the "good" 38th Army would invade Beijing to oust the "bad" 27th Army, which perpetrated the killings on June 3-4. Skirmishes were reported between the two groups (by the AP), and citizens cheered soldiers entering the city who announced themselves as units of the 38th. However, as the Los Angeles Times pointed out on June 5, none of the soldiers involved in the occupation of Beijing wore identifying insignia on their uniforms or vehicles.

There were others spreading the word as well, including American, French and British official sources. French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas said on June 7 that "this grand and vast country is on the verge of civil war." (He was quoted by AP.) In retrospect, reporters might wish they had pressed the Australian air attaché and other diplomatic sources further to give the basis for their dire conclusions. Part of the problem was the absence of other news from China, combined with the demand by editors and producers for material that would support the placing of the China story in the lead spot on the front page or at the top of the television broadcast.

The reporters themselves felt they often had no alternative but to give the civil war rumors attention.

From their perspective, the possibility of civil war was being taken seriously around the world, and to have ignored it would have been to ignore anxieties--by the Chinese people and various governments--that were in themselves newsworthy. Were the foreigners evacuated because the media were reporting the danger of civil war, or were the media reporting the danger of civil war because the foreigners were being evacuated? Certainly each reinforced the other, and the rumors from Chinese sources kept spurring both.

In the event, the civil war story was the great canard of the China crisis. "On the civil war, yes, we went too far," Southerland said later. "But the sources weren't only diplomats, there was a larger picture there," he went on. "Something was going on--we saw evidence of tension among military units. You've got to remember there was a court martial of the 38th Field Commander which came out later, because he didn't move his troops.... I spent three hours one evening watching troops from one unit turning a machine gun on unarmed troops from another unit." There may well have been an element of deception in some of this military behavior, an attempt by some units to reduce the hostility they felt was being directed at them from the populace. None of the behavior seemed to justify talk of civil war.

Jackie Judd of ABC looked back: "I think that we probably did get carried away a bit on the civil war story.... [T]here's a vacuum, we have to fill it, once it's

filled with these things, they sort of take on lives of their own. As time went along, I think we weren't as strict with ourselves as we should have been about attribution." We agree, there was a problem with the level of attribution, and with the degree of certitude that crept into the stories. Reports initially attributed to "Chinese witnesses" or "Western diplomats" became, after a day, armies "reportedly" skirmishing or preparing for battle. ("Reportedly" can be defined as a word used by journalists to mean a rumor that has been around for a while without being either discredited or confirmed.) By the third day, even the "reportedly" had dropped from sight, and the incipient strife was stated as fact, without attribution or qualification.

25. REPRESSION, A NEW VERSION OF HISTORY AND CONTROVERSIES IN COVERAGE

Deng Xiaoping emerged on June 9 in the company of his senior colleagues (minus Zhao) to define June 4 as the elimination of a "counter-revolutionary" conspiracy against the Party and the socialist system. The reappearance of the leadership quickly led to the fading of the civil war story. The intensifying process of repression, the Chinese government's re-writing of history, and a new hostility to Western influence became the running stories throughout most

of June and beyond. These stories continued the powerful negative impact on American public opinion towards China, evidently influencing the policy-making process in the United States.*

In totalitarian societies such as China, citizens learn to be on their guard against questions from strangers. Some had lost that wariness during the height of the protest movement, but after the crackdown it was again palpable. Nevertheless, some television reporters not familiar with the history of xenophobia and repression in China frequently aimed cameras at citizens who had good reason to fear that contacts with foreigners might do them serious harm. After the crackdown, those few reporters who retained inside sources (such as the New York Times team) were able to do so because these sources were relatives of high-ranking Party officials, insulated from the danger of meetings with foreigners.

The guideline for most United States journalists is that information provided by any source can be attributed by name unless the source states in advance that the material is on background, not for attribution, off the record, not for quotation or not for use. This was the assumption we made in this study when interviewing United States government officials (all of whom refused to be identified by name), journalists and China specialists.

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*See pp.195-203 of this report.

But in countries such as China, where the exercise of free speech historically resulted very often in punishments ranging from death to the crippling of careers, foreign journalists have needed to operate by a more stringent ethical code. ABC ran footage on June 5 of an angry Chinese man, later identified as Xiao Bin, telling a live camera tales of violence he said he had seen the day before. His voice could be heard in Chinese, but there was no English translation. On June 10, ABC reported the shocking news that CCTV had shown ABC's pictures of the man "recorded by the Chinese apparently during one of our satellite transmissions to New York" and had appealed to the Chinese public to help find and apprehend him for "rumor-mongering." On June 11, ABC showed CCTV pictures of Xiao Bin, arrested in the city of Dalian, confessing that he was a "counter-revolutionary agitator."

Anchor Sam Donaldson said ABC would henceforth transmit interviews from China with faces blocked out, and sure enough the next spot showed students being interviewed with faces blocked out. At the end of the program Donaldson said ABC was "deeply distressed" by the use of ABC footage in the arrest. Susan Zirinsky of CBS said of this episode: "It was at that moment that we realized, and so did the people in China, the very chilling meaning of a 'global village.' The impact was devastating to us."

On June 12 a CBS news spot showed reporter Bob Simon venturing out to a village an hour from Beijing, where a twelve-year-old was shown (full face) saying he'd heard "students were killed." A motorcyclist (shown in profile) and his wife (shown full-face) were interviewed as well. "I know everything about what happened in Beijing," he said.

"Let's go," said the wife.
"We support student demands," the man said. "There's too much corruption. Prices are rising so fast a horse couldn't catch up."
"Stop worrying about the world's problems," she said. "Go to work or go home but shut up."
"What I'm telling is the truth," he said.
"You're going to get yourself executed," she said.

Throughout this dialogue in Chinese, Simon and his interpreter were shown watching the exchange between husband and wife. Moments later, a Chinese college student, his back to the camera, was shown saying (in good English) that he had told some people in his home village what happened in Beijing and "most of them believe me." The interview was interrupted by the village Party boss, and the student told Simon to leave quickly. Simon asked the student, "Are you afraid now?" and the man replied, "A little."

The producer of that segment, Kathy Sciere, told us that she and Simon knew about "the ABC man" (Xiao Bin) after they shot the film but before they sent it. She said they decided not to block out faces or eliminate interviews, although they omitted full-face shots of the student from Beijing. "There was a lot of discussion," she said. "Should we black out this guy's [the Beijing student's]

face? The motorcyclist's? We felt the guy on the motorcycle...was almost comical. But the student, he had been at Tiananmen," and he had asked to be protected.

Sciere said there was reluctance to block out faces because "especially in a situation where interviews are translated, you read what a person has to say by the unspoken emotions on their faces. The key emotion at that time was fear or anger. And these are very hard to convey with a black shadow...."

On June 13, as fear enveloped urban China, Mark Litke of ABC entered the Shanghai home of a worker, accompanied by a camera crew. They were followed by five police officers who detained the crew members and questioned the family. Litke said "a cloud of suspicion will follow them [the family] for some time to come--a lesson of life in a police state." On the next day's show, ABC's Jackie Judd pointed a camera at a man with one arm in a sling, who pushed his free hand against the lens to protect his identity. The footage was aired to make the point that citizens now feared the camera.

Judd said later: "I wish we could have anticipated the consequences for people we put on the air, the days after the massacre...[the Chinese people] didn't care anymore. They had lost their fear. This anger continued two to three days after the massacre." But the man who didn't want his face or injured arm shown was overruled; his picture was

aired ten days after June 4. He obviously cared, and had expressed his fear of foreign journalists. The journalists involved should have respected his concern about his own safety and protected his identity or rejected using pictures of him at all.

At a later panel discussion of media coverage of China,[29] Richard Hornik of Time offered two observations about coverage of the People's Republic. One was that no source is telling the whole truth, "even if they think they are." The second was that "no story is worth a source's life." Both are useful guides for future coverage, in China and elsewhere.

In China, CNN emerged with a special role as an instant, pervasive video wire service. This became far more pronounced and dominant in the Persian Gulf War, but the powerful impact of CNN's unique strengths and weaknesses already was apparent in the Tiananmen coverage. Several Washington officials admitted that for the most part, the source of most of the immediate information used by Secretary Baker and other government officials in the first days after June 4 was CNN. It also was CNN that provided Capitol Hill with its raw information at that time, according to a Hill committee staff member who worked on the China issue.

A number of wire service reporters in Beijing felt that the "instant" coverage by CNN and other television

broadcasts distorted the picture of China seen in the United States--and made life difficult for them personally. On June 5 CNN broadcast a report that troops had occupied Beijing University, which is a thirty-minute drive from Tiananmen Square. The wires were obliged to hustle out to the northwest--on a wild goose chase. The fact that CNN was left playing in newsrooms twenty-four hours a day meant that wire reporters especially (because of their comprehensive mission) got callbacks from editors who wanted to know why a story was on CNN but had not yet moved on the wire. The wire reporters (who did not want to be quoted by name in their criticisms of other journalists) were unanimous in the respect they had for CNN's Chinoy, but felt that some of the other CNN reporters were too quick to give credence to rumors.

Some reporters saw CNN as a godsend, "more right than they were wrong," as UPI's Schweisberg put it. Still, the pressure of broadcasting live twenty-four hours a day meant that, as CNN producer Nancy Lane conceded, there was not always time to question whether rumors were firm enough before putting them on the air. "CNN is a unique entity," said Vito Maggioli later. "There is this twenty-four hour machine and this appetite for news, it makes a tough job even tougher. You have to constantly be thinking about what do we have here, what are we going to do with it, can we

wait, should we wait." At times there should have been more waiting.

On June 12, after it became clear that the use of even mini-cams meant high visibility and the danger that the cameraperson would be detained or even shot at, a CNN crew member flew into Beijing from Hong Kong with five "Handicams"--"the tourist kind of thing you buy downtown at Jack & Jill or Radio Shack," as the network's international editor, Eason Jordan, characterized them.* As a result of the China experience, Jordan said, CNN routinely dispatched Handicams to Israel, for use in coverage of Palestinian demonstrations in the occupied territories, and other places where filming had to be done surreptitiously, such as East Germany, Romania, or Soviet Georgia.

After June 4, the Chinese government made a big issue out of Hong Kong involvement with the protesters. On June 9 People's Daily did a front-page story on Hong Kong influence on the movement. It used three Hong Kong newspapers (Ta Kung Pao, Ming Pao and Ching Pao) to document Hong Kong "interference." Among the groups cited: "the 81-man Beijing Students Comfort Group" and the "Materials Liaison Center," created by the Hong Kong Federation of Students,

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*It had been a Handicam--the personal property of technical director Andy Parsons, who had bought it for his own home videos--that was used for the live broadcast from the interior of the CNN studio during the dramatic negotiations with Chinese officials on whether the satellite feed should be ended on May 19.

the Contemporary China Society, the Students' Union of the Chinese University of Hong Kong and other organizations. These groups were said to have assisted the movement with "blankets, sleeping bags, telecommunications equipment" and other materials, as well as millions of Hong Kong dollars.

The American media did not pay much attention to these allegations. After June 4, such coverage as there was of the relation of Hong Kong to the crisis focused on the impact of the crackdown on the British colony and its future. The coverage dealt with Hong Kong's extreme sensitivity to Chinese domestic strife, and the implications for Beijing's takeover of the territory, scheduled for 1997.

In the middle of June, when one Hong Kong student, Yao Yongzhan, was detained in China, a connection was made in the American media between the crisis and Hong Kong's influence, but the activities and treatment of Hong Kong students, businessmen and journalists in Beijing were little touched upon. The Los Angeles Times reported on June 6 that many Hong Kong people in China appealed to the British Embassy for protection during the crackdown, but were told simply to fend for themselves.

The journalistic beginner is taught that the first thing he or she must do in covering municipal affairs is to "follow the money"--report on the fiscal aspects of whatever organization is being covered. The students had loudspeaker systems, walkie-talkies, cordless telephones, mimeograph

machines and colorful tents not made in the PRC. There were scattered, brief references in various stories, both print and broadcast, to the movement's being "inundated by donations" made by small businessmen and citizens of Beijing and other cities, by Chinese studying abroad, and by major donors in Hong Kong and Taiwan. There were also references to donated food. The movement's financial officer, Mi Weizhuo, was interviewed by the New York Times on May 31 and discussed the problem of receiving and banking and accounting for the spending of the donations.

Hong Kong's English-language South China Morning Post reported in detail on the donations from Hong Kong at the end of May, and ran stories containing allegations by Hong Kong organizations that some of the money went unaccounted for and may have been diverted to the personal use of student leaders. But almost none of the press in our American sample probed the matter, and we think they should have.

At the end of June, ABC's Ted Koppel, in "Tiananmen: The Untold Story," showed the students' tents and described how the government cited them as evidence of a counter-revolutionary conspiracy. But only the Los Angeles Times in our sample made much of the Hong Kong connection. On June 6 it reported the detention of one courier who had brought $260,000 (in United States currency) to Beijing from Hong Kong. This courier, Lee Cheuk-yan, was a Hong Kong labor

leader; in the above-mentioned People's Daily article, Lee Cheuk-yan was identified as a major culprit, and used as a prime example of a Hong Kong provocateur.

Similarly, while there were three articles that touched on Taiwan in the New York Times in May, none dealt with the delicate issue of the source of the funds that reached the students from Taiwan. Some of this money was raised privately, but no doubt much was raised by old-guard Guomindang (Nationalist Party) organizations as well. Nor was there much coverage of Taiwan's reaction to the entire Beijing Spring. The only television spot was aired by ABC on June 10, showing demonstrations in Taipei in support of the pro-democracy movement on the Mainland.

26. THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT'S VIEWS AND MOTIVATION

On June 12 on ABC, Peter Jennings gave the Beijing version of what happened (and did not happen) on June 3-4, then summed up his feelings (and those of many other journalists) by saying, "Not many outside China are likely to be impressed."

A significant divergence between print media and broadcast media in our sample came in their coverage of the Chinese government disinformation campaign that began on June 12. Television gave more prominent play to Beijing's attempt to redefine what happened on June 3-4, no doubt

because it was virtually the only footage available at that time. Newspapers and the AP, however, stressed aspects of repression (arrests, threats, asylum for dissidents) that could be expressed in words but offered no footage.

Foreign governments had an impact on the situation after June 4 by providing shelter to dissidents. The most famous case was the American Embassy's decision to give refuge to Fang Lizhi, the astrophysicist, which was given ample coverage both in print and on television. Many stories provided good context by including historical precedents for the decision, such as the sheltering of Cardinal Mindzenty in Hungary and Pentecostals in the Soviet Union. They also mentioned Washington's fear of reprisal in the form of Chinese-sponsored demonstrations, and connected that fear to historical events such as the torching of the British Embassy during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and the siege of foreign embassies during the Boxer Rebellion of 1900.

The Chinese government's view of Fang as a traitor was reflected in the coverage. There were also perceptive references to the Chinese cultural context, such as the embarrassment the Chinese government felt at an act recalling the indignities of imperialist extraterritoriality.[30]

When the networks sent their "parachutists" into Beijing, one result was that "good television" tended to

overwhelm the Chinese particularity of the story. One vivid photographic essay, by Bob Simon of CBS on June 16, showed how dramatic and effective television can be, even if at the expense of exactitude. Simon set the tone of emotion and personal opinion by referring to "the world's largest square and the year's most outrageous lie.... Even today you could see stains from the blood which was not shed, holes from the bullets which were not fired, treads from the tanks which did not charge...." (The file footage showed troops advancing and firing, with casualties falling, and stains and bullet holes--on Changan Avenue, rather than Tiananmen Square.)

Simon said the square was "vast, cold, empty--the kind of grand open space which totalitarian regimes have always found so pleasing." The film showed the vast void of cement, with metal helmets making a regular pattern on part of it. For contrast, Simon switched to footage of banner-waving demonstrators and said the square seemed "smaller two weeks ago, warm, human, not empty...full of innocence and hopeless ideas.... For one doomed moment it was honest, warm, human."

As the footage returned to marching troops, Simon said, "They destroyed democracy that night. They knew what they were doing. They did not blink." The footage returned to the demonstrators, singing the "Internationale," and Simon said, "They cannot erase the memory or the desire for

revenge," as the film shifted back to the empty square and the troops for the final scene--but with the haunting refrain of the anthem still rising, ghostlike, over all. Fade to black, then to Dan Rather, visibly moved.

Powerful stuff, but too partisan to be a news spot and perhaps better placed at the end of the show, tabbed as an editorial. Such images of absolute good and evil were the aspect of the coverage that some critics most objected to, and they do seem to have fallen outside the bounds of objective reporting. We feel the inherent emotional content of the crisis in China emerged from the event itself, and such dramatic taking of sides in a news report served to legitimize the Chinese government's otherwise exaggerated and even outrageous complaints about the coverage. We agree with the view of Al Pessin of VOA: "I think the emotion that's involved in a story ought to be the emotion of the players and of the event rather than the emotions of a reporter."

The last manifestation of the power struggle within the government in the time span of our study was the question of who would succeed Zhao Ziyang as Party chief and Deng's designated heir. Jiang Zemin, the Shanghai Party chief, was named on June 24, to the surprise of the experts and the journalists alike. None of the reporters in our sample guessed right on this. Most leaned towards Qiao Shi, the security chief; some (like Kristof of the New York Times on

June 18) included Jiang among the candidates as "a long shot." Sinologists did no better than the press at predicting Jiang's ascent.

27. THE MEDIA'S USE OF SPECIALISTS

In the month after martial law was declared, the Los Angeles Times opinion page ran pieces on China from seventeen different people. They included two regular columnists and one staff reporter. The rest were from outside journalists (Edward Gargan), politicians (Tom Hayden), foreign policy specialists (Henry Kissinger), citizens of China, human rights specialists, and (most frequently) academics from Boston, New York, Washington, Chicago, Michigan and California.

Some of them had things to say that were not included in the news coverage: Lawrence Sullivan (Adelphi University)--"Many student leaders...still consider China's rural population too ignorant to play a major political role." Perry Link (Princeton)--"Words, from the earliest times, have been understood [in China] as tools for moral guidance as much as for descriptions of fact." Dorothy Solinger (University of California, Irvine)--"What we see...is a very Chinese yearning for an improved 'government of men' but not, at this stage anyway [May 26], for a

government of law or a government by regularized, predictable institutions."

The Washington Post and the New York Times each had about the same number of pieces on China in the same period, but they were almost all by regular columnists, such as (in the Times) Anthony Lewis, Flora Lewis, A.M. Rosenthal, and Tom Wicker and (in the Post) Evans & Novak, Jeane Kirkpatrick, David Broder, Richard Cohen, Jim Hoagland and William Raspberry.

There were also editorials, letters to the editor and editorial cartoons. One letter in the New York Times, from Donald G. Gillin, a Vassar College specialist on China, observed: "China has in American minds ceased to be a kind of Oriental wonderland, full of opportunities for play and profit, becoming instead what most of those compelled to live there always knew it was: a grim, often terrible place." The institutions of the opinion page and the letter to the editor proved their worth in the China context. Specialists provided an added dimension, complementing reportorial coverage.

On CNN, of the fourteen specialist interviews and sound bites we logged on the "Prime News" shows between May 13 and June 15, ten made points that clearly went beyond the news content to provide context. The other four (using as a standard a contribution that went beyond information available from news reports at the time) added little. It

was not always possible to judge whether this was the fault of the questioner or the specialist.

CBS used twelve specialists (generally in shorter bites) between May 1 and June 21, and nine of them made contributions that went beyond what had been presented in the news. ABC brought on nine specialists between May 3 and June 11 and got original contributions from only three. Part of the problem in the case of ABC was that although Peter Jennings asked pertinent questions in his interviews with Michel Oksenberg, Mike Lampton, Harding, Doak Barnett and Kenneth Lieberthal, the information he was seeking was not available (or was outdated) in the United States and needed to be sought in China.

When asked to forecast how it would all turn out, specialists mostly either fudged (the eighty-four-year old Deng would not prevail "over time," as Lieberthal put it on "Nightline"), or offered the prevailing Beijing odds. While that is understandable, too few said that there was no way to know the answer.

Some critics have complained that the range of specialists used by television or welcomed by opinion pages was too limited. A number of experts--Harding, authors Ross Terrill and Orville Schell, exiled Chinese journalist Liu Binyan, Winston Lord, and Oksenberg--appeared to be ubiquitous. While over the period in question there were more than a score of different specialists interviewed, and

they expressed diverse views, we suggest the use of more diverse (yet credible) voices in the mix.

28. RETROSPECTIVES

There were long retrospective stories on the crisis by Kristof, Southerland, and a team at the Los Angeles Times that included Holley. Each offered a fresh look at the events of the Beijing Spring, with a comprehensive approach that added appreciably to an understanding of what had happened, and they deserve great credit for this extended coverage.[31]

The special section "A Shattered Dream" in the Los Angeles Times on June 25 was unprecedented for a foreign news story at that newspaper, and it became one of the basic options for the Times foreign desk on each subsequent major international story.

Kristof's initial reassessment of the June 3-4 events ran in the New York Times on June 21. In it he scaled back his estimate of the death toll to between four hundred and eight hundred, and dismissed accounts of mass killings on the square, saying they arose only several days afterwards and contradicted stories told immediately by "Chinese and foreigners who were on the square all night."

ABC's Ted Koppel, in a primetime special on June 27, tried to combine the immediacy of television with the

historical chronicle usually delivered in print, and offered some new insights into the sequence of events. Koppel, like the Los Angeles Times supplement, tackled the question of whether a bloody confrontation between the army and the citizens of Beijing could have been averted, and concluded that the crucial decision was made on May 27 when a minority of the students on the square, most of them new arrivals from out of town, rejected the leaders' proposal to end the sit-in, and vowed to stay on until June 20, when a meeting of the National People's Congress was to have been convened.

"In hindsight," the Los Angeles Times report concluded, "the protesters might have done better to vacate the square during this last week of May. They could have declared victory for their democracy movement and vowed to return some day. By abandoning Tiananmen, they would have forced leaders like Li and Deng to defend their hard-line stance inside the Party, where their political position was still shaky. There would have been no street battles and no bloodshed." This may turn out to be a major point in the history books about the Beijing Spring.

The piecemeal, seemingly confused military approach to Tiananmen Square on the night before the massacre continued to remain a mystery. Koppel, in his special, suggested that it was an attempt to seize the square that failed because Beijingers had been drawn onto the streets in huge numbers by the incident on June 2 in which three civilians were

killed by a military jeep. Some Chinese dissenters said the hesitation was a provocation designed to humiliate the soldiers involved and thus justify the violence used against civilians the next day.

Jeane Kirkpatrick, in a column in the Post on June 13, asked (as did a column by reporter Jim Mann in the Los Angeles Times) why the China specialists got much of the crisis wrong. "No one, including the experts," Kirkpatrick wrote, "expected the great uprising in the square, nor the brutality with which it was suppressed." In general, this was a fair characterization of the opinion pieces and interviews with sinologists we surveyed from our eight sample news outlets. But not even the Chinese had anticipated the uprising--any more than most Americans expected Dan Quayle's selection as vice-presidential candidate in 1988, or most British expected Margaret Thatcher's fall in 1990.

29. IMPACT ON PUBLIC OPINION AND POLICY

The Beijing crisis created a significant shift in American public opinion towards China, which affected United States policy toward the People's Republic. Public opinion polls showed China with a favorable rating of between 65 and 72 percent and an unfavorable rating of between 13 and 28 percent in the period from 1980 through March of 1989.

After June 4, the favorable rating in three polls dropped to between 16 and 34 percent, while the unfavorable rating rose to between 54 and 58 percent, a swing of massive proportions, rarely encountered in opinion polling.*

A strong anti-Beijing coalition arose from nowhere. Until June of 1989, there was a generally positive attitude towards China in Congress, but it was more passive than active. Opposition came on special issues, such as Tibet and China's harsh methods of population limitation. It was based on the traditional anti-People's Republic forces on the right. Post June 4 elements in the anti-Beijing coalition included Chinese studying in the United States; Chinese-Americans, who ended their long political silence; protectionists who found imports from China a suddenly vulnerable (and quite sizeable) target; human rights interest groups, which escalated their attacks on a broad range of Chinese violations, in addition to the crackdown on the movement; and liberal Democrats in Congress, who had until then "carried water" for the Administration's China policy on Capitol Hill. There was also a partisan aspect to the shift--it was the only foreign policy issue on which George Bush was seen to be vulnerable over the following year or more.[32]

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*The data was compiled by the State Department Office of Public Affairs.

The impact of the crisis on policy was outlined by several Bush Administration policymakers we interviewed. "The big public opinion change knocked the policy tools out of our hands," said one. "Policy on China was unmanageable [after June 4] and will be unmanageable for a time." Said another policy-maker: "The major impact of the event is that it sets the conditions of debate. Look at Vietnam. The impact still conditions our policy on the boat people, on Cambodia. This [event in China] will have an effect [on policy-making] for five years and then will leave behind residual images. The impact is very powerful. Whether it will lead to bad policy, you evaluate case by case. It does take more effort on the part of the executive branch." But was the media responsible for the nature and degree of the impact?

Given the complex relationship between the event and the changes in public opinion/politics/policy, it is difficult to determine whether the media served simply as a messenger to convey the event to these audiences, or whether the manner in which the information was conveyed was a distorting prism that altered perceptions.

Television was surely the key to the impact on public policy. No images for years had been more stark than those emerging from China. And, as the Gallup poll of July 1989 established, 80 percent of those who followed the China story learned of the events initially from television,

compared to 11 percent from newspapers and 5 percent from radio.

Tom Bettag, former executive producer of the CBS evening news, pointed out that television coverage of international crises is of a different order from print coverage, which set the norms for treating such events abroad until recent years (when American television covered South Korea, the Philippines and subsequently Eastern Europe). "Television was able to bring the people of China to life as real human beings," Bettag said. "Newspapers tend to leave them as conceptual figures, but television puts real flesh and blood on the people. The immediacy of television could make you feel like you cared about these people as if they were sons and daughters of your friends."

This meant, however, that there was no distance between the audience and the protagonist; that television had placed the public on the side of one faction in a political and cultural context that had been only fleetingly explained and was not easy to understand. Bettag realized the dilemma, saying that "there are huge dangers when one culture reports on another. People are not alike.... Maybe it will get better with time."

Among those who learned of the events from television were American diplomats in Beijing and Secretary of State Baker. The State Department spokeswoman, Margaret Tutwiler, was credited by the New York Times with persuading Baker to

clap sanctions on Beijing, by saying to him: "You've got to turn on your TV set; you can't believe what's happening unless you see these tanks."[33]

The initial images viewed by politicians and policy-makers, those that "conditioned" the reactions which followed, were conveyed to Washington by CNN, because, said a Capitol Hill staff member, "the Times and the evening newscasts were a day late...[and] there was not much time to read or watch media. It was CNN that determined the base of events, throughout the Beltway. The images of that night were the primary stimulus for the feeding frenzy that took place here in Congress immediately afterwards." People on Capitol Hill "assumed that the camera did not lie and was basically accurate in the run-up to June 4, the events that night and after," he said.

Harding of Brookings pointed to the sheer scope of the coverage, noting that other acts of violence in China in the past, and such recent acts in other countries--for example, Burma--were given far less coverage. "What really affects public opinion and then policy is the enormous play this thing got," he said. The fact that such coverage was possible in the Beijing of 1989 was something to applaud, rather than bemoan. The limitations imposed by governments on media (especially television) coverage of similar situations elsewhere, before and after Beijing, only serves to prove that governments are aware of the power of the

media's depiction of violence. It is a power the octogenarian leadership in China may have underestimated in 1989.

The specific claims of media distortion made by United States government officials included:

- The emotionalism of television reporting and the "hot images" of the hunger strikers, the "Goddess of Democracy" and the man stopping a column of tanks.

- The idealization of the students combined with the media's delegitimization of the regime, which artificially created a Manichaean conflict.

- The failure of the media to warn before June 4 that "bad things are coming."

- The showing of footage (by CNN and others) that misrepresented the time and place of violence.

- The exaggeration of the casualty toll.

- "Discussion of civil war, hyped on CBS news, despite contrary indications from our Embassy, led to eight thousand calls a day at State. [It] panicked the American people. So we had to call and evacuate all of China. Sure we saw the risk in Beijing, but not elsewhere," said one government official.

Some of the government's complaints about media distortion were borne out in the emotionalism and bias shown by several reports in our sample, and by later statements by reporters. We noted, for example, the Bob Simon feature

that allowed emotion to replace accurate facts about what happened on Tiananmen Square, and Jay Mathews' statement that "[w]e didn't make enough of a point that soldiers died too and parts of the crowd were real tough guys." But several other charges by government officials clearly are less legitimate. The rumors of civil war were spread by American officials before they appeared in the press, and the same was true for the exaggerated casualty toll. The media, we found, did indicate after May 26 and before June 4 that "bad things are coming," but given all the twists the story had already taken it would have been rash to have assumed before June 4 that violence on such a scale was inevitable.

One of the journalists from our sample who has been based both inside China and inside the Beltway, Jim Mann of the Los Angeles Times, pointed out another aspect of the debate over media impact on policy. "Press coverage always influences the way in which United States policy is cast and explained to the public. I think it has less of an influence--some, but much less--on actual policy. That is, sometimes policy changes, but not as often as public statements and explanations of policy change. It's the latter that changes in response to press coverage."

Mann's point seems to be borne out by the fact that even within the United States government there were different views of the media's role in creating China's

changed image for the American public. In the White House the press was blamed for distortion that affected the policy level. But Mark Mohr of the State Department said: "In the end, the subtleties of the press, or whatever was reported in the press, didn't make a difference. The Chinese shot the people."

And in the end President Bush did not change his China policy despite the huge media impact on American public opinion. "With all the facts coming through," said sinologist Robert Ross, "what did Bush do with those facts? ... He might have been wiser, he might have been more knowledgeable, but he didn't change his policy."

As for the media's responsibility for political impact, David Caravello of CBS rejected the idea that the press should have realized in advance what a shock the crackdown would be to the American people and that the press somehow should have made preparation for that. "Don't turn the incredible emotionalism and power of the story upside down," he said, "by saying that somehow we [the press] didn't prepare the American public for the violence--that wasn't our job."

Al Pessin of VOA said: "If live pictures of things happening in Beijing or elsewhere are on the television at the State Department and it has an impact on their policy formulation, that's not anything we have to worry about." But Pessin added an important point which we would

underline: "[O]ther than to make us--or television journalists--more precise, more careful...."

30. CHINA AS A REVOLVING DOOR

After the dust settled, the conventional journalistic image of "the China story" had shifted. It was still the same country, but it was now characterized by "repression" instead of "democracy" and people's "power." To return to history for a moment, there was nothing new about such an image of China. These were the predominant themes in American writings on China during the warlord period and in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. Nor was there anything new about these characterizations replacing a totally different set of images that earlier had been presented to Western readers.

But how could this be? How, in a brief span of several weeks, could the imminent coming of a democratic China have given way to such a bleak picture? Veteran journalist Stanley Karnow reflected on the tough course of the American idea that the Chinese are "perfectible." He pointed out, "Henry Luce put his faith in Chiang Kai-shek, while Edgar Snow and others saw Communism as the instrument of salvation. Both proved to be wrong."

One solution to the puzzle was to revert to the concept of cycles; as Kristof put it in a May 21 New York Times

article: "the cycles of hope and repression." Indeed, many Chinese did feel just that sense of China going nowhere, while the rest of the world, including the Marxist world, underwent enormous change. Yet to talk of cycles seemed tantamount to admitting that nothing changes, whether in China or in one's understanding of the country.

It was not in the nature of most American reporting to plunge into fatalism--that was a more Chinese response--and, again reflecting an earlier theme, a note of optimism remained even after June 4. Southerland in the Washington Post on June 28 wrote: "[The scenes at Tiananmen Square] were as old as the revolutionary ideas of freedom and democracy...how easily Communist leaders can still resort to brute force when their power is threatened. But it is difficult to imagine how a totalitarian state can be rebuilt once it begins to crumble."

Perhaps such optimism was premature, but all the same it was in the reformist tradition that had informed earlier American journalistic writings on China. For all of the differences between the tradition of the American pioneers in covering China and the more technically-oriented journalists of 1989, an irrepressible spirit of progress did lie within much of the 1989 reporting. Some of it may have been inspired by changes in the Soviet Union and the growing democracy movements in Eastern Europe. It gave vision and a sense of the universalism of the Chinese students' cause to

the articles and broadcasts. The same tradition may also have made some American reporters too optimistic about Zhao Ziyang's chances of besting the Leninist old guard, and too inclined to see Li Peng as a man with feet of clay.

CONCLUSIONS

During the Beijing Spring of 1989, people around the world witnessed powerful events unfolding in a remote and previously inaccessible corner of the globe. This worldwide real-time audience had existed on a few rare occasions before, for such events as the Americans' landing on the moon in 1969. But there was something different this time. Many in the audience were politically galvanized by what they saw.

Starting with Tiananmen, the reach of the press, especially television, into virtually any country at any time became an important new factor in international diplomacy. The global zoom lens which focused on China soon moved on to Eastern Europe, the Persian Gulf and the dissolving Soviet Union.*

To be sure, the United States media's attention to the China story was fostered by a confluence of factors. These included preparations for coverage of the Sino-Soviet summit that predated the outbreak of the protests, and the unprecedented access to the dramatic fixed location of Tiananmen granted in advance to American television networks

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*For a discussion of how television affected the reunification of Germany, for example, see "Window to the West: How Television from the Federal Republic Influenced Events in East Germany" by Dieter Buhl, Discussion Paper D-5, Joan Shorenstein Barone Center on the Press, Politics, and Public Policy.

by the Chinese government. History never repeats itself exactly and Tiananmen will not recur in its 1989 form, nor will the media's experience in China ever be duplicated elsewhere in much the same fashion.

Yet the China coverage was in some ways a turning point for the media as well as the policy-makers and the audience. "It was after Tiananmen Square that we really redefined how we do television.... As I went to cover the war in the Gulf, the lessons of China were with me every moment," concluded Susan Zirinsky, who produced much of CBS's Beijing Spring coverage.

I. The Quality of the Coverage

Working under intense, confusing and dangerous conditions, many journalists performed beyond the call of duty to provide instant and thoughtful coverage of the Beijing Spring to the wider world. As the Pulitzer Prize and other awards granted to such coverage attest, it was, for some journalists, the finest performance of their careers.

Nevertheless, critics have raised a number of issues which this study attempted to address. In some cases, the complaints were not so much about the coverage as about the fact that the Chinese government's violent crackdown on the protesters was seen on television by a horrified audience.

It is unfair to blame the messenger--the media--for the power of those images and their effect on the global political landscape. Regrettably, it was beyond the scope of this study to determine whether the journalists' pro-student framework for coverage--or the powerful pictures themselves of the government's crackdown--did more to shape public opinion about the events. More than likely, both factors influenced public opinion.

The study was, however, able to examine and evaluate a representative sample of the U.S. coverage. Some complaints did not hold up under this scrutiny. In particular:

-- Some American government officials, China specialists and others spoke of the media's failure to anticipate the incipient crisis. But neither did China specialists, foreign governments, nor, for that matter, most of the Chinese people. All of the news organizations in this study were alert to the possibilities of government use of force to repress the movement, and reported the initial restraint exercised by both sides. They offered repeated cautions in the two weeks before June 3 about the prospect of repression and possibly violence. Perhaps the American public itself, grasping hopes, ignoring dangers, was inordinately swayed by the inspiring image of the "Goddess of Democracy" that arose in Tiananmen Square at the end of May.

-- Likewise, the media cannot be blamed for running

stories about the prospect of civil war after June 4. The possibility was being taken seriously by many Chinese, Western military attachés in Beijing and governments around the world (including the United States State Department and the French Foreign Ministry). The problem was the level of attribution and the certitude that crept into the stories. Ultimately, the possibility of intra-military strife was stated as fact.

However our study did find some areas in which the coverage failed to live up to expected Western standards of objectivity and accuracy. We present these findings with the admitted benefit of hindsight, in hopes that they will help journalists, policy-makers and scholars understand and deal more effectively with the role of the press in future international crises.

These findings are as follows:

-- Much of the coverage favored the protesters.

While a neutral observer from a democratic society might naturally have sided with the protesters, regardless of how the media filtered the events, the coverage itself did at times violate journalistic standards of detachment, objectivity and fairness. This was a function as much of what was omitted as what was included in the coverage.

First, there was insufficient coverage of aspects of the student movement that might have run counter to its positive image. "There was clearly a need in the coverage

of Tiananmen Square for skepticism, not only about the Chinese government...but also about the student movement and the manipulation of the media--or effort to--that was being done by the students," said Jeff Sommer of Newsday in retrospect.

The students often were depicted, particularly on television, as the righteous side of a Manichean conflict, rather than as a subject of neutral scrutiny by the press. Specifically, the press underreported the pro-democracy movement's actions that were distinctly undemocratic, hypocritical or elitist. Conflicts among the protesters were downplayed, as well as the reluctance of some student leaders to welcome workers into their movement. There were inadequate attempts to report the source of funds the movement received, and whether they were properly used and accounted for.

Fuller coverage of the government's reasons for fearing the student demands, assuming the reasons were explained, would not have constituted an apologia, but it might have led to a more sober expectation by the American public of prospects for the movement's success.

It is the role of the editor or the executive producer in the home office to keep field correspondents from "going native" and identifying too closely with their beats. It is also the role of editors and producers to welcome and encourage stories that run counter to perceived truth, such

as a few Chinese hunger strikers eating.

-- The technology outpaced the journalism, which created some serious problems.

By comparison with the media covering China in previous decades, the resident Beijing press corps in 1989 was both larger and better equipped, in language skills, cultural awareness, time in the field and high-tech gear. The use of new technology, including cordless telephones, small "Handicams," faxes and "pixelators" that send visual images over telephone lines, enhanced the quality of the coverage and the access of both print and broadcast media to the story.

The contribution of television from China was enormous, especially in breaking down the sense of China as remote and "exotic" and making the cause of the Chinese students seem a universal cause. At the same time, there seemed to be too much emotion in the reporting and too little discretion in what was aired on TV.

The ease with which TV could go "live" created several problems: it allowed the inclusion of misleading or irrelevant materials, including unverified rumors that were hard to check and resist in the competitive pressure to provide something new; it cut into texture and context that would have provided a much fuller and more balanced account; and it placed the lives of some people depicted in the news accounts--wittingly or unwittingly--in danger. Some Chinese

sources who appeared in news reports suddenly found themselves in danger. They were identified by authorities. Under U.S. norms, anyone is fair game for news cameras. But when covering such events as the Beijing Spring protests and violence, news professionals should have been more sensitive to the dangers to which their sources were subjected.

"Don't be afraid of pictures, but encourage us to be careful about pictures," urged David Caravello of CBS. While decisions were made hour by hour not to take certain pictures or not to air certain pictures, others were broadcast that should not have been. One example could be the June 14 footage of the Chinese man who tried unsuccessfully to avoid Jackie Judd's ABC camera by putting his hand in front of the lens.

At times the footage was misused to portray something other than what was actually filmed. Some of this happened, because producers in New York and Washington were compiling summary pieces without clarifying what was happening where. Sinologist David Zweig, who was involved in an ABC special that looked back at the crisis, told us, "I asked a producer why they used footage of citizens beating soldiers when (the script) was talking about violence by the army. The answer was that they had no footage of the army shooting people." This misuse of pictures is not only unacceptable under Western journalism norms but it seriously undermines the credibility of the media.

Much important news occurred off-camera, which added to the distortions in the coverage. "If there were cameras at the Minzu Hotel or elsewhere on the streets of West Beijing (that night), the reaction of the public and government might have been different," remarked Jim Mann of the Los Angeles Times. The cameras cannot film everything; the inquiring mind must always seek additional information for context and interpretion.

Broadcast journalists and audiences are just learning that in live broadcasts, truth remains conditional. The mystery of what might happen next is a part of the attraction. No one on either side of the camera or microphone should assume the information is complete. Broadcasters must evolve rules of behavior and coverage that limit or cushion the impact of inadvertent dissemination of misleading messages. Soon, print reporters may be carrying satellite dishes on their backs and small cameras, doing what used to be the province of a four-person television crew, and that will bring new challenges and responsibilities. "I think we have to worry about that," said Al Pessin of VOA. "I think the more live stuff that goes out, the more mistakes are made, the more garbage that goes out. I did some live stuff, but I very much valued that forty minutes to just sit, think about it, put it down on paper, make a few changes before I went on the air."

Certainly, when we really get to the stage that the

satellite dish is carried around with camera and cordless phone, editorial judgment will need to be tighter and more sophisticated than it was in the China case.

"One of the great lessons of China," concluded Susan Zirinsky of CBS, "is that because it **can** be live, doesn't mean you **have** to give it to them live."

-- Lopsided access created lopsided coverage.

In international crisis situations (in China and in subsequent locales, such as Panama, the Persian Gulf and Russia), some of the "players" may not be accessible to provide reporters with their sides of the story. The China coverage was somewhat hampered by the fact that the conservatives in the Chinese government refused to talk to the press, and the only officials who did talk, even surreptitiously, to the press favored the reformist faction. This led to false optimism at one point that the reform faction might win the struggle. A more nuanced approach to such sources, with a clearer sense of their own limitations and agenda, would have improved the coverage significantly.

In addition, the press didn't reach adequately beyond the sources in Beijing to examine what was happening in the rest of China. This was partly due to understaffing, partly to geographic convenience: the events in Beijing dominated the coverage because that was where the press was gathered, and where the cameras were located. Thus there was insufficient attention to the fact that the democracy

upsurge was more than a student movement, and more than a Beijing phenomenon. None of the media dealt adequately with the role of workers and other non-students in the movement. Only print made clear the particular fear of worker participation that was felt by Deng and other leaders, who were aware of the danger an independent labor organization--such as Solidarity in Poland--would pose to the Communist Party's control over China.

Only after the crackdown did some of the eight news organizations seek to establish what the 75 percent of the Chinese people who live in the countryside knew, believed or favored. It was too little, too late. If the peasants didn't matter--an unlikely conclusion--the press should have said so, and why.

-- "Parachute" and "visit" journalists were no substitute for journalists with in-country experience.

Whenever there is an international crisis, whether it be in Panama or the Persian Gulf or the former Soviet Union, the supply of journalists with specialized skills will inevitably fall behind the demand, and this happened in China. A small army of "parachute" journalists, who specialize in going from breaking news event to news event around the globe, descended on Beijing in full force. They are highly professional, but they are not specialists. Therefore, it is not surprising that reporters with China experience did a better job of sifting rumors and judging

news. A dearth of China expertise occasionally diminished the networks' coverage. Insights into Beijing politics sometimes were unavailable or went unused.

The China experience underscores the time-tested observation that the press should avoid covering any major country only from crisis to crisis or by "parachute" journalism--the big correspondent who arrives and says (in the words of Jim Mann of the Los Angeles Times) "Take me to the repression!" Deng had repeatedly emphasized his intolerance of free speech as early in the reform period as 1979. Visiting journalists often lost sight of such realities, thinking that China, like Russia, was undergoing a profound liberalization. They thought that communism was wafting away on the breeze. As Ted Gup of Time put it, the media have to learn how to cover a "slow strangulation as opposed to a blow on the head."

-- There were significant lapses in factual accuracy by some journalists.

The fact that other journalists got the story right undermines the argument that the errors were due to the genuine danger and hardship of the job. The need to fill a 24-hour news hole, to beat the competition, to justify the costs of sending extra people to Beijing--all this ended up driving much bad information into the public record.

Some journalists risked their lives to cover the People's Liberation Army's sweep through the streets of

Beijing on the night of June 3-4, 1989. The accounts offered by reporters on the scene were often accurate and compelling. The problem, as always in the midst of chaos and violence, lay in the judgment of what use to make of accounts from non-journalistic witnesses and participants. Instead of erring on the side of caution, some journalists simply passed on the latest unverified rumors that crossed their paths.

Keeping in mind that hindsight often adds unfair advantages to any analysis, this study nonetheless concludes that some of the media should have come closer to a rounded appreciation of the events of June 3-4 within the first week. Wildly inflated casualty figures and the use of the geographically erroneous catch phrase "Tiananmen Square massacre" gave the Chinese government a pretext for deflecting the central moral issue raised by its brutal response to the protesters. If some of the media were wrong about how many people died, and where, were they also wrong about the significance of the killings? No, they were not. But the exaggerations and the error of geography permitted that question to be raised, and undercut the media's credibility in some quarters.

-- The coverage was at times parochial.

At times shorthand catch-phrases, such as "pro-democracy" movement--which meant one thing to American viewers and another thing to the protesters--were over-used,

eclipsing the complexity of the protesters' viewpoints.

Several news organizations, allowing a Cold War framework to oversimplify the struggle as one between democracy and communism, gave the impression that the protesters were seeking the overthrow of the Communist Party. Most students recognized that there was no immediate alternative to Party rule, and were instead seeking greater Party responsiveness to their needs and interests.

II. The Impact of the Coverage

While it is difficult to trace the actual impact of press coverage on public policy, this study suggests that:

-- The coverage, particularly "live television," touched an emotional chord with the American people and changed the political climate for U.S. policy-makers, making it more difficult for President Bush to proceed with his policy of cooperating with China.

The sheer volume of reporting of the Chinese protest movement and its suppression may have intensified the swing of American public opinion away from an accommodating view of China. While nearly three-quarters of the American public had a favorable impression of China in early 1989, only one in three Americans now regard China favorably. Observed Harry Harding in the Brookings Review (Spring, 1992):

"Since the crisis in Tiananmen Square in June 1989...Americans have perceived China in much darker terms: repressive at home, irresponsible abroad, engaging in unfair commercial policies toward the United States. Both houses of Congress have passed, by large majorities, legislation that could cost China its most-favored-nation trade status. Even the Bush administration, having spent enormous amounts of its dwindling political capital to preserve a relationship that so many Americans now question, seems disenchanted with Peking."

However, journalists told us they made no conscious decision to mount a massive coverage; they merely followed the events. "Was the world clamoring for more?" asked Susan Zirinsky of CBS, when we asked her about the motivation behind the saturation coverage. "It wasn't my purpose to determine what the world was clamoring for. I saw a story unfolding, and it was my job to give it to the world."

-- The Chinese media's coverage of the student movement had an impact within China that was little recognized at the time.

The Chinese media's brief moment of freedom, which led to favorable reporting on the protest movement, was incorrectly viewed by many Chinese people as a signal that officials condoned the movement. Research by Linda Jakobson for this study concluded that the Chinese press coverage unwittingly may have misled peasants and workers to believe

that they could join the student protest without penalty from the government.

The eight American news organizations in our study made reference to the brief "window of freedom" the Chinese media enjoyed, but did not emphasize that it was this press freedom that spread the word across China.

The Western media's coverage may have affected the student protesters as well. "Did we incite the demonstrations by being there? I don't think so. I will admit there was comfort for the students that we were recording events," concluded Susan Zirinsky of CBS. Shen Tong, who handled much of the public relations and press liaison for the student protesters, observed that his comrades, having initially focused their efforts on the Chinese press, changed their target once they recognized the power of the world press to help them "make noise through cameras and newspapers."

-- The Tiananmen Square coverage was a watershed moment in defining different roles for television and print journalism. Television became the raw "news" and print became the analysis and research-based reservoir of facts. While newspapers used to set the news agenda for both television and print, that was reversed by the live shots from Beijing.

As Daniel Southerland of the Washington Post put it, "I don't even feel I'm in the same world with television. Some

of that television stuff was really moving in a way I don't think I could have achieved." Jeff Sommer of Newsday confessed that "CNN is the key, actually to all of it." CNN led the other networks to devote more live coverage to the crisis and brought a worldwide audience together, thus "setting an agenda for all of us," he said. "That is something new.... It just began to take place in Tiananmen Square."

Jim Mann of the Los Angeles Times agreed. "At least for my newspaper, Tiananmen represented the end of the old era of coverage. We covered (China) with four reporters. In the Gulf War, you're talking about twenty to twenty-five reporters.... More importantly, you're assuming that the readership already knew the main news of the day by the time it read the newspaper, and that what you were providing was investigative work and context. I mean, we did a main news story each day, but we just assumed that it was going to be the least read story that there was. Yes, when you look back at Tiananmen, that was the end of an old era."

This more dramatic separation of roles brought out the best and worst in both media. It enabled television to do what it does best--provide powerful pictures and immediacy--but occasionally at the expense of comprehension. It enabled print to provide the facts and analysis, but without the powerful images. For example, the subsurface power struggle within the Chinese Communist Party--prior to its

emergence into public view on May 19--was adequately reported by the five print news organizations in our sample, but the three television networks gave viewers only hints.

David Caravello of CBS defended the simplicity of television's coverage. "People in the streets, no repression, these were remarkable events. They are not very complicated. I think that was communicated across the board, print, television, radio.... None of us are graduate seminars.... That's why we need the experts. And I want to caution, let's not say the media ought to be graduate seminars. I wonder if we're not heading that way." This report concludes that while it may be true that too much is expected of the media in the 1990s, it may also be true that the media should take the responsibilities of their increased influence on public opinion and policy into consideration a bit more seriously.

The events of 1989 in China were themselves so powerful in political as well as human or emotional terms that had there been no wobbliness of the media prism, the result of China's image in the world might well have been substantially the same. Still, news organizations can benefit both themselves and the public interest by a periodic review of their mechanisms and norms of coverage. The media have become too important in today's world to simply turn to the next story and expect to repeat the same triumphs--and perhaps repeat the same mistakes.

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Orville Schell, NYT, 6/15/89.

31. The Los Angeles Times published a twelve-page special section, "The Shattered Dream--China/1989," written by Mann, Holley and others, on June 25, 1989. The Washington Post ran Southerland's long story on Aug. 20. Kristof's article ran in the New York Times Sunday Magazine on 6/21/89.

32. Presentation by Mike Lampton, director of the Council on U.S.-China Relations, at Harvard, April 1990; background interviews with two Congressional committee staff members, Washington, 5/14-15/90; background interviews with six U.S. officials involved in planning and executing China policy, May-June, 1990.

33. Maureen Dowd, NYT, 5/20/89.

APPENDIX A
INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED AS PART OF THE CURRENT STUDY

Abrams, Jim, Associated Press, Beijing Bureau Chief, interviewed in Beijing on May 1, 1990.

Bettag, Tom, CBS Evening News, Executive Producer, telephone interview, July 26, 1990.

Bennett, Amanda, China Specialist, Wall Street Journal, telephone interview, July 12, 1990.

Burton, Sandra, Former Beijing Bureau Chief, Time Magazine, in Beijing, May 4, 1990.

Bush, Richard, Solarz Staff, in Washington, D.C., May 14, 1990.

Chua, Howard, Time Magazine, telephone interview, June 3 1990.

Elliott, Dorinda, Newsweek Magazine, Beijing Bureau Chief, in Beijing, May 20, 1990.

Faison, Seth, Beijing Correspondent, South China Morning Post, May 9, 1990.

Fingar, Tom, China Specialist, Intelligence and Research Department, U.S. State Department in Washington, D.C., telephone interview, May 15, 1990 (Not for attribution by name.).

Florcruz, Jaime, Beijing Bureau, Time Magazine, in Beijing, April 30, 1990.

Getler, Mike, Assistant Managing Editor-Foreign, Washington Post, telephone interview, July 1990.

Goldman, Merle, China Specialist, Boston University, in Cambridge, MA, May and June, 1990.

Gwertzman, Bernard, Foreign Editor, New York Times, in New York City, May 6, 1990.

Harding, Harry, China Specialist, The Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., telephone interview, May 29, 1990.

Holbrooke, Richard, Former Assistant Secretary of State (Far East), in New York City, May 7, 1990.

Holley, David, Los Angeles Times, Beijing Bureau Chief, in Beijing, April 30, 1990.

Hopkins, Mark, Former Beijing Correspondent, Voice of America, in Cambridge, MA, March 1990.

Huang Yasheng, deputy chairman of China Information Center and an eyewitness to the events in Tiananmen Square in the spring of 1989, in Cambridge, MA, May 1, 1990.

Ignatius, Adi, Beijing Correspondent, Wall Street Journal, in Beijing, May 10, 1990.

Jordan, Eason, International Affairs Director, CNN, telephone interview, May 18, 1990.

Karnow, Stanley, Author and China Specialist, telephone interview, April 25, 1990.

Kristof, Nicholas & WuDunn, Sheryl, Beijing Correspondents, New York Times, in Beijing, May 7, 1990.

Leung, Julia, Asian Wall Street Journal, in Hong Kong, December 5, 1989.

Li, Simon, Foreign Desk, Los Angeles Times, telephone interview, July 19, 1990.

Litke, Mark, Hong Kong-based Correspondent, ABC News, February 1, 1990.

Liu, Melinda, Hong Kong Bureau Chief and Asia Regional Editor, Newsweek Magazine, in Hong Kong, February 10, 1990.

Lubman, Sarah, Former Washington Post stringer and currently with United Press International Bureau in Beijing, in Beijing, May 4, 1990.

Lord, Winston, Former U.S. Ambassador to China, in New York City, May 7, 1990.

MaCartney, Jane, Asiaweek reporter from end of April to June 4, 1989 in Beijing, and Reuters correspondent from August 1989 to present, in Hong Kong, November 21, 1989.

MacFarquhar, Roderick, Professor, China Specialist, Harvard University, May 1990.

Mathews, Jay, Former Beijing Correspondent, Washington Post, telephone interview, July 12, 1990.

Miller, Keith, Hong Kong-Based Correspondent, NBC News, in Hong Kong, January 23, 1990.

Munson, Jim, Beijing Correspondent and 1990 President of the Foreign Correspondents Club of Beijing, Canadian Television, in Beijing, May 15, 1990.

New York City Press Breakfast: Chua, Howard, Time Magazine, Bennett, Amanda, Wall Street Journal, Lane, Nancy, Producer CNN, Polowetzky, Nate, Former Foreign Editor, Associated Press, Sciere, Kathy, Producer, CBS, Posner, Irine, Center for Communication, Jones, Terril, Beijing, bureau, Associated Press, New York City, May 7, 1990.

Paal, Doug, China Specialist, National Security Council Staff, in Washington, D.C., telephone interview, May 15, 1990 (Not for attribution by name.).

Perkins, Dwight, Professor, Harvard University, May 1990.

Polowetzky, Nate, Former Foreign Editor, Associated Press, telephone interview, July 16, 1990.

Pomfret, John, Beijing Bureau, Associated Press, in Hong Kong, February 11, 1990.

Schweisberg, David, Beijing Bureau Chief, United Press International, in Beijing, May 1, 1990.

Sciere, Kathy, Senior Foreign Producer, CBS Evening News, telephone interview, July 16, 1990.

Shen Tong, Chinese student leader, presentation at the John F. Kennedy School, in Cambridge, MA, April 4, 1990.

Solomon, Richard, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia, in Washington, D.C., June 1, 1990 (Not for attribution by name.)

Rosenberg, David, Foreign Editor, Asian Wall Street Journal, in Hong Kong, December 13, 1989.

Southerland, Daniel, Beijing Correspondent, Washington Post, in Beijing, May 4, 16, 19, 1990 meetings.

Stewart, William, Time Magazine, November 28, 1989.

Strauss, Valerie, Foreign Desk, Washington Post, telephone interview, May 20, 1990.

Sutter, Bob, China Specialist at Congressional Research Service, May 14, 1990 (Not for attribution by name.).

Sylvester, Charles, former U.S. Consul-General in Shanghai, a presentation at Harvard, June 1990.

Terrill, Ross, China Specialist, in Boston, May 1990.

Thomson, James, Professor, Boston University, May 1990.

Washington, D.C. Press Breakfast: Morton, Bruce, Correspondent, CBS, Dingus, John, News Editor, National Public Radio, Mann, Jim, Former China Correspondent, Los Angeles Times, Judd, Jackie, Correspondent, ABC, Pessin, Al, Former Beijing Correspondent, Voice of America, Shaw, Bernard, Anchor, CNN, Strauss, Valerie, Washington Post, in Washington, D.C., May 15, 1990.

Wiedemann, A. Kent, China Country Officer, U.S. State Department, in Washington, D.C., May 15, 1990 (Not for attribution by name.).

Wong, Jan, Beijing Correspondent, Toronto Globe and Mail, in Beijing, May 8, 1990.

Wu, Eugene, Chief Librarian of Yenching Library, in Cambridge, May 1990.

APPENDIX B
LIST OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

William Alford	Harvard University School of Law
Tom Ashbrook	Boston Globe
Michael Berlin	Boston University
Jan Berris	National Committee on U.S. China Relations
Keith Botsford	Bostonian Magazine
Fox Butterfield	The New York Times
David Caravello	CBS News
David Chiel	Ford Foundation
David Chu	East-West Center
Rachelle Cohen	The Boston Herald
Merle Goldman	Fairbank Center for East Asian Research
Xiaoxia Gong	Harvard University
Weigun Gu	Harvard University
Ted Gup	Time Magazine
Bernard Gwertzman	The New York Times
Harry Harding	Brookings Institution
Nancy Hearst	Fairbank Center for East Asian Research
Nancy Hodes	Harvard University
William Hodes	Indiana University School of Law
Ben Huang	Harvard University
Yasheng Huang	Fairbank Center for East Asian Research
Ellen Hume	Joan Shorenstein Barone Center
Akira Iriye	Harvard University

Linda Jakobson	Sanomat, Finland
William Joseph	Wellesley College
Jackie Judd	ABC News
Mark Jurkowitz	The Boston Phoenix
Joseph Kahn	Dallas Evening News
Anthony Kane	Asia Society
Marvin Kalb	Joan Shorenstein Barone Center
Stanley Karnow	Author
Tom Kent	Associated Press
Don Kline	Tufts University
Jane Lampman	Christian Science Monitor
Yrjo Lansipuro	Finnish Broadcasting Company
Nancy Lane	CNN
Tim Leland	The Boston Globe
Tom Levenson	WGBH
Jim Mann	Los Angeles Times
Tim McNulty	The Chicago Tribune
Mark Mohr	Department of State
Jonathan Moses	Office of James Florio
Gary Orren	Joan Shorenstein Barone Center
Al Pessin	Voice of America
Irine Posner	Center for Communications
Lucian Pye	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Charles Radin	The Boston Globe
Robert Ross	Boston College
Jeffrey Sommer	Newsday

Dan Southerland	Council on Foreign Relations The Washington Post
Wendy Tang	Canadian Government
Andrea Taylor	Ford Foundation
Ross Terrill	Author, Fairbank Center for East Asian Research
James Thomson	Boston University
Shen Tong	Democracy for China Fund
Stan Vittoz	York University
Zhigiang Wang	Harvard University
Susan Weld	Harvard University School of Law
Sophia Wong	MIT and Wellesley College
Eugene Wu	Harvard Yenching Library
John Yemma	The Boston Globe
Frederick Yu	Columbia University
Amy Zegart	McKinsey and Company
Susan Zirinsky	CBS News
David Zweig	Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy