



Directorate of
Intelligence

~~Confidential~~
NOFORN

2

The Road to the Tiananmen Crackdown: An Analytic Chronology of Chinese Leadership Decision Making



A Research Paper



Approved for Release
MAR 2000

b (1) b (3)

Reverse Blank

~~Confidential~~
EA 89-10030
September 1989

**The Road to the Tiananmen
Crackdown: An Analytic
Chronology of Chinese
Leadership Decision Making** [REDACTED]

Scope Note

*Information available
as of 29 August 1989
was used in this report.*

This paper provides a baseline analytic chronology of the Chinese leadership's decisionmaking between the death of Hu Yaobang on 15 April 1989 and the ouster of General Secretary Zhao Ziyang at the 4th Plenum of the party Central Committee on 23-24 June 1989. It is not an attempt to look beyond the watershed events of April-June or assess their significance [REDACTED] but is an effort to preserve what happened in one document. [REDACTED]

The paper also identifies the major players, the methods they used in assuring support, and the critical decision points in the leadership's handling of the simultaneous crises within its own ranks and on Tiananmen Square. Events in the provinces, troop movements, the actions of the student-led demonstrators in the square, and foreign reactions are introduced only to give context to the leadership's actions. [REDACTED]

The paper draws mainly from accounts in the Chinese and Hong Kong press, which both sides in the leadership struggle used to explain their actions and rally support for their respective positions. [REDACTED]

**The Road to the Tiananmen
Crackdown: An Analytic
Chronology of Chinese
Leadership Decision Making** [REDACTED]

Summary

Chinese leadership decisions leading up to the crackdown on prodemocracy demonstrations and the subsequent purge by Deng Xiaoping and other party hardliners of the demonstrators' supporters appear to have gone through four major phases:

- From 15 to 26 April, the regime tried intimidation, making statements and publishing editorials that were so provocative, they fueled rather than cooled the demonstrations.
- From 26 April to 20 May, then party General Secretary Zhao Ziyang tried to soften the regime's tactics, causing an irreparable split between Zhao and the hardliners.
- The hardliners regained control over decisionmaking in the third phase, 20 May through 4 June, which culminated in the bloody crackdown on Tiananmen Square.
- Finally, beginning on 5 June the hardliners turned their attention to consolidating power and removing potential threats to their control.

[REDACTED]

On the basis of leadership statements and press reporting during these four phases, we can draw several conclusions about decisionmaking during the crisis. **First, Deng Xiaoping probably approved of and directed the entire crackdown.** He signed the order sending the troops into Tiananmen Square on 3-4 June; he brought back the old guard when the party Standing Committee faltered; and he personally dealt with the military. Deng was clearly worried that the demonstrators would lead China toward anarchy. He witnessed the crowds in the square, knowing that demonstrations had spread to cities throughout China and were increasingly supported by workers and party and government officials. When the crowds began sporting signs calling for his dismissal, the independent student and worker unions grew in size and aggressiveness, and his protege Zhao broke with the leadership and made his pitch for the crowd's support, Deng clearly believed that Communist Party rule was in jeopardy. [REDACTED]

Second, next to Deng, Yang Shangkun was the pivotal figure in the crisis. Military units under his relatives or allies appeared to figure prominently in the suppression, and his speech on 24 May was urged on officials after the crackdown for study. He was involved in approving the 26 April editorial in the party paper *People's Daily*, which laid out the regime's hardline stand on the demonstrations, and we know that he was present at many of the pivotal meetings leading up to the declaration of martial law

~~Confidential~~
~~NOFORN~~

and the decision to storm the square. His major rival, Zhao Ziyang, is now gone, and no one with the stature to oppose Yang has emerged. His ties to the military—which has again become a major player in Chinese politics—are stronger than almost everyone else's except Deng's.

The actions of members of the old guard¹ during the crisis, and the homage paid to them in the press since the massacre, indicate that they have reinserted themselves into the front ranks of the Chinese political process. We believe that, although they are "semi-retired," their influence behind the scenes early in the crisis was particularly strong. They did not become publicly prominent, however, until attack policy had been set and martial law decided upon on 20 May. Individuals such as Chen Yun certainly influenced decisionmaking through their proteges in the earlier stages of the crisis. As the crisis continued to grow, Deng brought the old guard deeper into regime planning and publicly highlighted their support for the hard line.

Zhao Ziyang appeared to believe that he could exploit the demonstrations and halt the conservative inroads on his reform programs. It appears almost as though he was willing to stoke the fires of discontent in order to regain the political advantage. From the outset of the crisis in mid-April, Zhao consistently set himself apart from the hardliners. Zhao's allies were mainly in the party, although he needed Deng's backing to keep other party factions in line and to be assured of military backing. Where Zhao miscalculated was on the question of Deng's support. Once he lost that, he was finished politically. He then compounded his errors by going outside the party. Zhao and his supporters—once they realized that they could not alter the hard line decided upon on 24 April—tried to use the crowd to intimidate Zhao's opponents within the party and leadership. Thus, like Deng and the old guard, Zhao and his supporters opted for informal channels to press their views, but these could not overcome Deng's ties to the military and his support from the hardliners.

¹ For the purposes of this paper, the "old guard" refers to a small group of party elders—most in their 80s or 90s—who have criticized Deng's economic reform program as straying too far from orthodox Marxist-Leninism. For the most part, they do not hold official positions in the party or government. Most prominent among the old guard are Chen Yun, Peng Zhen, Bo Yibo, Wang Zhen, and Li Xiannian.

~~Confidential~~

The regime's approach to handling the crisis was fairly consistent throughout—do not yield on the question of political reforms and try to intimidate the demonstrators. Variations in policy were the result of: indecision on the part of the leadership on how to handle the unprecedented display of popular feeling; stalling tactics employed by the regime while it assured itself of—and then amassed—military support; [REDACTED]

The regime underestimated the depth of feeling against it and the staying power of the demonstrators, underscoring the degree to which it was—and remains—out of touch with the population. The regime continually misread—or, as the crisis drew out and leadership frustrations increased, chose to misread—the tenor of the crowd, and prolonged the crisis through a series of clumsy and provocative moves that closer contact with the people might have prevented. [REDACTED]

Zhao's efforts to change the policy—and the participation of his supporters in the demonstrations—probably contributed to the euphoria of the students, encouraging their intractability and eventually deepening the disillusionment and resentment against the regime. Once Zhao failed in the Standing Committee, his supporters in the press and at such organizations as the National People's Congress tried to force a policy reversal by appealing to the people and by trying to manipulate the demonstrations. This intensified the misperception that the reformers were gaining strength and would change the regime's policy toward the demonstrators, if only the students pushed hard enough. [REDACTED]

The provincial party and government elites played only a minor role in setting the regime's response to the demonstrations. Deng, Yang, and the old guard appear to have had most of their partisans in the capital rather than the provinces, where the reformers appeared stronger. Thus a hardliner like Chen Yun could look to his proteges in the center's economic offices, and Yang Shangkun could rely on his supporters apparently firmly entrenched in the PLA headquarters units [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] This line between the center and provinces cannot be drawn too starkly, of course—Defense Minister Qin Jiwei and the Beijing Military Region leadership

were at best only lukewarm in their support of the crackdown, and Zhao supporters dominated some economic offices and the press and propaganda sectors. [REDACTED]

As in previous Chinese political crises, the formal channels failed. In intraparty disputes where the divisions are too deep to permit a compromise—in both Mao's struggle against the party apparatus in 1966 and Deng's ouster of the Maoist faction in 1978-79, for example—one side tries to move the dispute outside the inner circle once it realizes that it cannot win party approval. These actions invariably undermine the party's image of unity and counteract its attempts to portray itself as infallible. Deng tried to prevent future outbreaks by strengthening the party and government institutions. Yet, when the deep splits within the party were intensified by the crisis, Deng himself proved unwilling to allow the structure he helped create to function without his direction. Instead, he sought to use the continuing influence of the old guard, whose members were in theory retired, to counter Zhao. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] But Deng's pushing the military back into the political forefront went against his earlier efforts to get them out. Moreover, the military does not appear to be united. Some officers were clearly reluctant to reenter the political arena. Qin Jiwei opposed using troops, as did the old marshals and, reportedly, many other senior officers. Indeed, we believe some officers may also resent the prominence Yang Shangkun and his family members and immediate coterie have gained. Yet the use of informal channels has not resolved the problems of fragmented leadership that helped produce the crisis in the first place. What it has done is further weaken China's formal political institutions by undermining whatever little credibility and legitimacy Deng had tried to restore to them.

(C NF)

Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Scope Note	iii
Summary	v
15-26 April: The Regime Tries Intimidation	1
26 April-20 May: Zhao Presses for Moderation—and Fails	3
20 May to 3-4 June: The Hardliners Prevail	9
4-24 June: Unreason Triumphant	15

~~Confidential~~
~~NOFORN~~

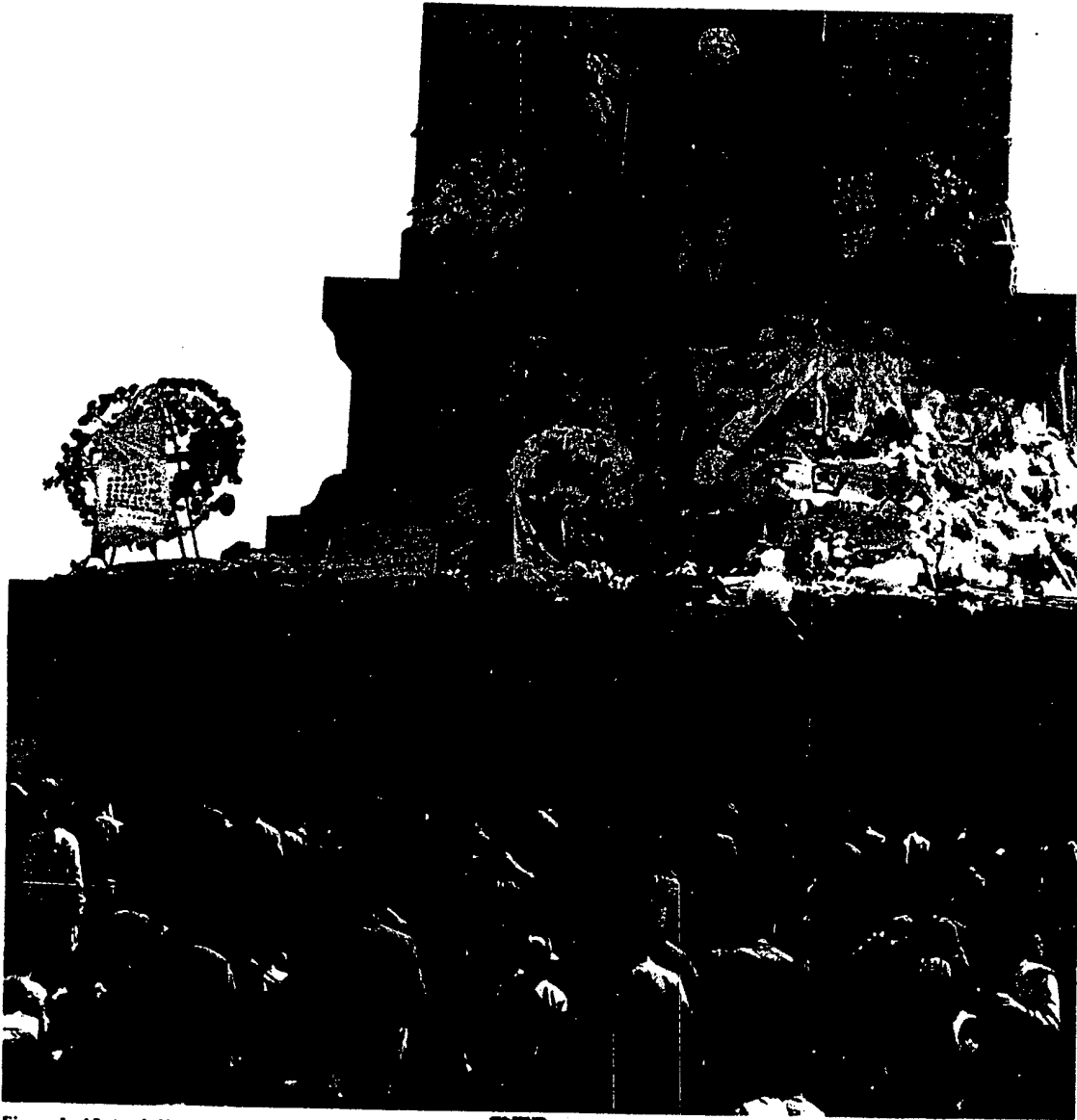


Figure 1. 15 April. Hu Yaobang dies and demonstrations begin.

~~Confidential~~

**The Road to the Tiananmen
Crackdown: An Analytic
Chronology of Chinese
Leadership Decision Making**

15-26 April: The Regime Tries Intimidation

Former party leader Hu Yaobang's sudden death on 15 April, and the student demonstrations that began two days later, caught the regime unprepared. While it apparently had expected demonstrations around the 70th anniversary of the 4 May Movement,² We believe Hu's death and the unexpectedly large size and rapid growth of the demonstrations that followed kept the regime off-balance and led to misjudgments throughout the crisis. The students, also, were probably surprised by the turnout, but moved more quickly. Their early successes in the face of leadership indecisiveness heightened the students' sense of power and probably led them to be more aggressive and intractable than they would otherwise have been.

We believe this constant need to catch up to events, and the accompanying sense that the situation was continually slipping out of control, possibly led the regime to blunder its way through the crisis by opting for unnecessarily provocative measures that fueled rather than cooled the demonstrations. As the crisis dragged on, the leadership became increasingly distracted by its own internal struggles, and its attention was continually divided between contending with the demonstrations and with the internal power struggle.

The leadership's first efforts to resolve the crisis were ineffective.

the

² The 4 May Movement was a student-led movement founded in 1919 to protest the poor treatment China received at the Paris Peace Conference. It was sparked by Japan's demands for the transfer of German interests in Shandong to Tokyo.

declaration by the Beijing Municipal Committee that the demonstrations were illegal. This failed to deter the students, some of whom actually attempted to storm the leadership compound of Zhongnanhai on 18-19 April. After this, the students were left alone, probably in the hope that protests would end with Hu Yaobang's funeral on 22 April. When the students continued demonstrating, the leadership met to reconsider its course of action.

The regime's basic line—which it tried to follow throughout the crisis—was probably set in the two days following Hu's burial. According to Hong Kong and official Chinese press, the entire Politburo met on 23 April and again on 24 April—twice the second day—including an “expanded” meeting, which was attended by several non-Politburo members. Zhao visited North Korea during this time (23-30 April) and thus was unable to soften the regime's hardline stance. He attended only the Politburo meeting on 23 April. His ally on the party Standing Committee—party propaganda chief, Hu Qili—was at all the meetings, but Zhao's conciliatory touch was lacking. After Beijing party secretary Li Ximing described the situation, the Politburo tried to intimidate the demonstrators, ordering Hu Qili to draft an editorial for the party paper, *People's Daily*, condemning the demonstrations, creating a committee under Hu and party security chief Qiao Shi to deal with the students, and urging party cadre to “mobilize” to “defend” Beijing.

~~Confidential~~

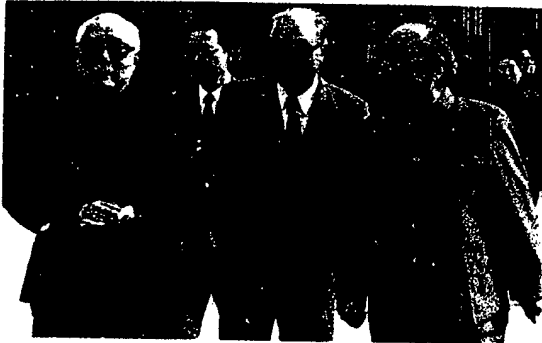


Figure 2. Li Xiannian, Li Peng, Zhao Ziyang, and Yang Shangkun

Decisions during the period were still made within the formal party structure. The party Standing Committee and the Politburo met at least five times between 15 and 26 April.

During this period, hardliners such as Chen Yun were certainly involved, but mainly in a secondary, supportive role. Deng, Yang, and the Standing Committee—minus Zhao—largely determined the regime's course.

Moves to implement this hardline approach began almost immediately. On 25 April, according to Hong Kong press, the party Standing Committee again met (without party General Secretary Zhao, who was still in North Korea) and under Li Peng's chairmanship toughened its stance, authorizing the use of "whatever means necessary" to end the protests. Following that meeting, Li Peng warned Chinese journalists to support the regime in their reporting. These confrontational measures were capped by the publication on 26 April of the hardline *People's Daily* editorial—reportedly approved by Deng, Li Peng, and Yang Shangkun—that inflamed the students and worsened the crisis.

At a time when a conciliatory gesture may have defused the situation, the worst fears of a leadership—at heart intolerant of political pluralism—ruled. Deng Xiaoping, who the Hong Kong press stated watched the student demonstrations from the Great Hall on 18 April, probably saw the demonstrations as an attack on him and all he had built, invoking memories of the Cultural Revolution and other periods of disorder in China.

A leading hardliner, Chen Yun, in a speech to party cadre on 17 April, pushed for "more discipline" for the students.

~~Confidential~~

26 April-20 May: Zhao Presses for Moderation—and Fails

This period was characterized by Zhao's return and his attempts either to soften the regime's position or to publicly dissociate himself from it. As it became clear that his was a losing effort, we believe Zhao or his supporters tried to fuel the demonstrations by urging—or at least not discouraging—reform-minded party and government officials and organizations to participate in them. Zhao's struggle against the policy agreed upon during his absence caused confusion within the leadership and sent contradictory signals to outside observers. The period ended with the party Standing Committee losing any role it may have had in the decisionmaking process; the public resurfacing of orthodox party elders opposed to many aspects of Deng's economic reforms; and Zhao's submission of his resignation as party General Secretary [REDACTED]

Immediately following the 26 April editorial, the regime appears to have tried to implement the uncompromising approach chosen at the 24 April Politburo meetings. On 26 April, it held "large cadre meetings" to condemn the students. The official Chinese press reported the convening of two meetings on the heels of the 26 April editorial. These were an emergency "high-level" party meeting on 26 April and an expanded Politburo meeting—which probably included party old guard members among the attendees—held the next day. On the 28th, the party formed a "Student Affairs Committee" chaired by Li Peng and including Qiao Shi, Hu Qili, Minister for Public Security Wang Fang, and State Education Commission head Li Tieying. Except for Hu Qili, all the committee members supported the hard line. On the same day, Chinese media also published Beijing party chief Li Ximing's harsh comments about the demonstrations and on the next day called for stability in China. [REDACTED]

When the editorial inflamed the students, the regime softened its stance, playing for time and trying to undermine student unity. It issued a joint Central Committee-State Council guidance on 27 April suggesting that the students be given channels to express their views—as long as these did not include any efforts to adopt a "Western system"—and pushing for the avoidance of bloodshed, although promising a "tough line" against looters and arsonists. The same day, a State Council representative said that the Council was ready to talk to the students "at any time." Government television aired a "dialogue" between State Council spokesman Yuan Mu and the students on 29 April, and Beijing's mayor and party leader met the next day with "official" student representatives. These measures neither frightened nor mollified the demonstrators, who continued to march, attracting even more supporters, including members from proreform offices within such party think tanks as the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Indeed, the students were either so emboldened or annoyed by the leadership's actions that they gave the National People's Congress (NPC) an ultimatum on 2 May demanding that the regime meet their demands within 48 hours. [REDACTED]

The leadership was clearly unprepared for the students' intransigence and the increasing popular support they were receiving. During the first week of May, for example, Deng apparently felt relaxed enough about the government's ability to handle the situation to go out of town. The Chinese press reported him to be in Qingdao on 2 May; other press reports put him in nearby Beidaihe during this same period. When the measures did not end the crisis, the regime—apparently without Deng in Beijing to provide guidance—stumbled. It was during this week of indecision and floundering that Zhao reentered the picture. [REDACTED]

~~Confidential~~



Figure 3. Crowd in Tiananmen Square.

~~Confidential~~

When Zhao returned on 30 April, he appeared determined to repair the damage he believed had been caused by the 26 April editorial and the hardline approach built around it. Following a party Standing Committee meeting on 1 May, Zhao began drafting his speech for the Asian Development Bank (ADB) meeting. According to Beijing Mayor Chen Xitong's speech on 30 June, which publicly criticized Zhao's actions during the crisis, Zhao obtained neither Deng's nor the party's approval of the text of this speech.

Then, while the State Council was rejecting the student ultimatum on 3 May, Zhao was simultaneously providing the students with an advance copy of his conciliatory ADB speech, which he gave the following day. On 6 May, Zhao addressed a meeting of political workers, calling for further "openness" in reporting the protests. This marks the beginning of the public split between Zhao and the hardliners over how to handle the demonstrations, fueling student hopes and masking the regime's hardline approach.

Throughout this period, the reformers supporting Zhao tried to influence events outside the inner party circles, relying on their supporters in the NPC and in the propaganda and media areas. The day after the publication of the 26 April editorial, party propaganda chief and Zhao ally Hu Qili calmed editors' fears by telling them they could report on the demonstrations honestly. Over the next few days, the Chinese public was thus treated to a fairly open press. By 9 May, Chinese journalists were so encouraged by events that more than 1,000 had presented the government with a petition calling for more press freedom.

The split between Zhao and the hardliners grew quickly. At an enlarged Politburo meeting on 8 May, the Beijing city leadership complained about Zhao's tactics and attitudes. At another enlarged Politburo meeting two days later, Zhao presented his five-point

program⁴ for resolving the crisis—which, according to the Hong Kong press, received support only from NPC Chairman Wan Li. During the same meeting, Shanghai party chief Jiang Zemin asked for support for his firing of dissident Shanghai newspaper editor Qin Benli—a move that Zhao had criticized sometime earlier.

Zhao's persistence in presenting his case may have been caused in part either by his misreading of Deng's position or by being deliberately misled by Deng. Zhao may have viewed Deng's apparent absence from these two meetings—he was reported by the Hong Kong press to have been in Wuhan on 9 May—as an indirect vote of confidence. Furthermore, if Hong Kong press reports are accurate, Deng apologized to Zhao in private for his "miscalculations" in handling the students.

On 13 May, the student protestors began their hunger strike and occupation of Tiananmen Square, injecting new urgency into the crisis. At this time, Zhao made what appears to be his last attempt to alter the Politburo's hard line. During at least five Standing Committee meetings between 13 and 19 May—held against the background of the 15-18 May visit by Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev and the student occupation of Tiananmen Square—Zhao repeatedly opposed the regime's handling of the crisis. He broke consensus on every vote—thus shattering the image of party unity that the leadership traditionally tries to portray—and in the end probably tendered his resignation:

- On 13 May, according to the Hong Kong press, he called on the Committee to reject the 26 April editorial. He lost, 4 to 1.

⁴ Zhao's five-point program proposed to negate the 26 April *People's Daily* editorial; have Zhao take full responsibility for the editorial's retraction; create a "special bureau" under NPC auspices to investigate the actions of children of senior officials, including Zhao's two sons; detail the personal activities and finances of all government officials of vice ministerial rank or above; and abolish all cadre privileges and announce the income and perks received by high-level cadres.



Figure 4. 18 May. Zhao visits students on hunger strike the day before his fall.

- On 16 May, the press says he urged the Committee to be more receptive to student demands. He lost, 4 to 1.
- On 17 May, at a meeting the Hong Kong press says he called, Zhao again presented his five-point proposal for dealing with the crisis.

The Hong Kong press reported another version in which Deng on 17 May summoned the Standing Committee, plus Yang Shangkun and Li Xiannian, to hear Zhao's proposals—which they rejected by a vote of 6 to 2 (Zhao and Hu). According to Hong Kong and Chinese press, at a meeting on 18 May only Zhao opposed the Standing Committee decision to consider the use of or to use force to quell the demonstrations. Both Deng and Yang were present for this meeting. Later that day Li Peng met for the first time in a combative televised "dialogue" with student leaders. Li lectured them but was abruptly cut off by student leader Wuer Kaixi, who stated, "We don't have much time to listen to you, Premier Li." The following day, the Standing Committee decided to place Beijing under martial law. Zhao and Hu Qili opposed the decision.

The reformers' efforts to overturn the decisions to act decisively against the students apparently demonstrated to Deng that he could no longer depend on his General Secretary or the party Standing Committee. Zhao, often with Hu Qili's backing, prevented the

party Standing Committee meetings from achieving a consensus on confronting the demonstrators. More important, it was Zhao's actions during these meetings—and his disclosure to the world during Li's meeting with Gorbachev that Deng made all important decisions in China based on a secret agreement laid out at the first plenum of the 13th Party Congress in 1987—that finally alienated him from his mentor. Although this disclosure was hardly surprising, it was unforgivable public distancing by Zhao of himself from the policy decisions on the student problem.

The party Standing Committee's disunity over how to handle the impending confrontation with the students encouraged Deng Xiaoping to rely more heavily on the informal interpersonal network that has long characterized China's leadership politics. The most influential group of potential supporters were his comrades among the party's old guard, in recent years the major critics of his economic reform program. The hardliners' actions after the declaration of martial law on 20 May seem to indicate that they coordinated their efforts with Deng

Deng also worked to ensure military backing for the hard line he was taking. He was aided by longtime associate Yang Shangkun, who had served for the last several years as Deng's daily link to the Chinese military. Even so, this proved to be no easy task as military region commanders reportedly ignored his calls to support a crackdown from late April to mid-June, not wishing to become embroiled in a political struggle. On 18 May, probably following Gorbachev's departure from China and the day before the party Standing Committee's vote of 19 May on martial law, the Hong Kong press claims the "enlarged" party Military Affairs Commission met with Deng in Wuhan to discuss how to handle the demonstrators. Reportedly present at the meeting, albeit hesitatedly, were the Commission membership and all military region commanders. We believe they voted, with reservations, for martial law.

~~Confidential~~

Once he had the military and the old guard behind him, we believe Deng called a joint meeting of the party Central Committee and the State Council on the evening of 19 May to approve the decision agreed to earlier in the day by the party Standing Committee to use the military. According to official Chinese press, Qiao Shi presided over the meeting, Li Peng spoke on behalf of the party Standing Committee in favor of martial law, and Yang Shangkun—whose speech would, of course, indicate military support for the decision—spoke in support of Li. Zhao, who, in his capacity as party General Secretary and head of the party Standing Committee, should have given the speech, not only refused, but did not attend. Thus, by the time he again went out into Tiananmen Square for an emotional meeting with the students on the evening of 19 May, Zhao was out of power. In that meeting a tearful Zhao made a final plea to the students to leave and stated, "I'm sorry, we've come too late." That night, units from the 15th Airborne Army, and from the 27th, 38th, and 63rd Group Armies, began moving to the outskirts of Beijing. Martial law went into effect the following day at 1000 although huge crowds of students and citizens blocked their way keeping the military from imposing the decree. [REDACTED]

The declaration of martial law marked the end not only of Zhao's already waning political influence, but also that of the party Standing Committee. The Committee's meeting on 19 May to consider imposing martial law was its last before the 3-4 June massacre. With two of its members—Zhao and Hu Qili—possibly under house arrest, its legitimacy and usefulness were seriously weakened. Instead, Deng began to rely more and more on the "enlarged" Politburo, which enabled him to bring in the old guard and the military. The press and the NPC were still not under control, the military had yet to be tested, and the provinces had not been deeply involved in what was mainly a Beijing phenomenon. But the political struggle between the "reformers" and the "hardliners" that had characterized the last several years of Chinese leadership politics ended at least temporarily when Deng brought back the old guard to help him assert the hardliners' political primacy. [REDACTED]

~~Confidential~~

~~Confidential~~

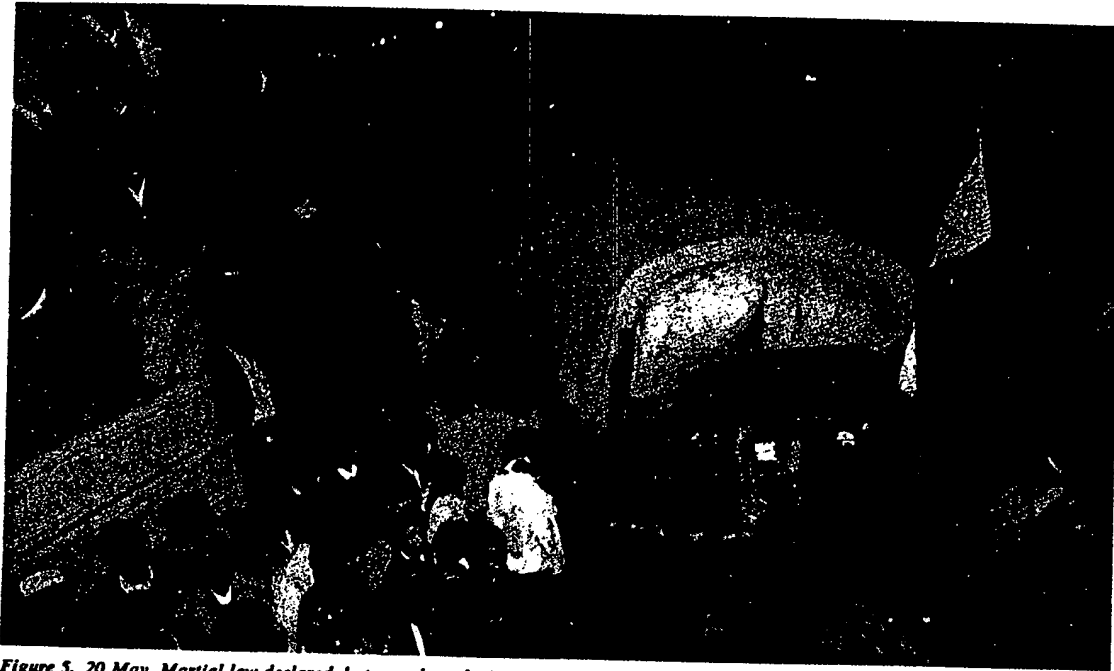


Figure 5. 20 May. Martial law declared, but crowds make it unenforceable.

~~Confidential~~

20 May to 3-4 June: The Hardliners Prevail

With the political eclipse of Zhao Ziyang, the leadership during this period concentrated on quelling the demonstrations and bringing the press, the party, the government, and the military into line. The period was marked by the regime's unwillingness to tolerate any opposition, and its increasing reliance on armed force to solve its political problems. [REDACTED]

While the world watched the dramatic opposition to the military by the people in Beijing on 20 May, the hardliners moved to clean out pockets of opposition among the party and government elites. The official Chinese press stated that, on either 20 or 21 May, State Council spokesman Yuan Mu called "responsible persons" to Zhongnanhai for criticism. We believe these "persons" may have included Zhao aides Bao Tong, An Zhiwei, and Du Rungsheng, who the Hong Kong and Western press reported had been dismissed from their positions within the party hierarchy. The last glimmer of hope for the reformers, the return from the United States of NPC Chairman Wan Li—who in theory could call an emergency session of the NPC to overturn the martial law proclamation—was extinguished on 24 May. When Wan Li's plane arrived in Shanghai, he immediately disappeared from public view. [REDACTED]

The leadership also began pressing for expressions of support. On the 20th, the official Chinese press published letters of support from various party front groups, several provinces, and most military regions. On 21 May, the party Central Committee and the State Council jointly urged regional officials to declare "their positions and attitude" toward Li Peng's martial law declaration by noon. This deadline was not met by all provinces, although all eventually backed martial law to some extent. To make sure that provincial leaders got the message, the regime summoned each provincial party secretary to Beijing for one-on-one sessions with top party leaders, according to official press. Military backing for martial law was implied in the publication on 24 May of a letter of support given by the three People's Liberation Army (PLA) General Staff departments. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The official

Health Rumors

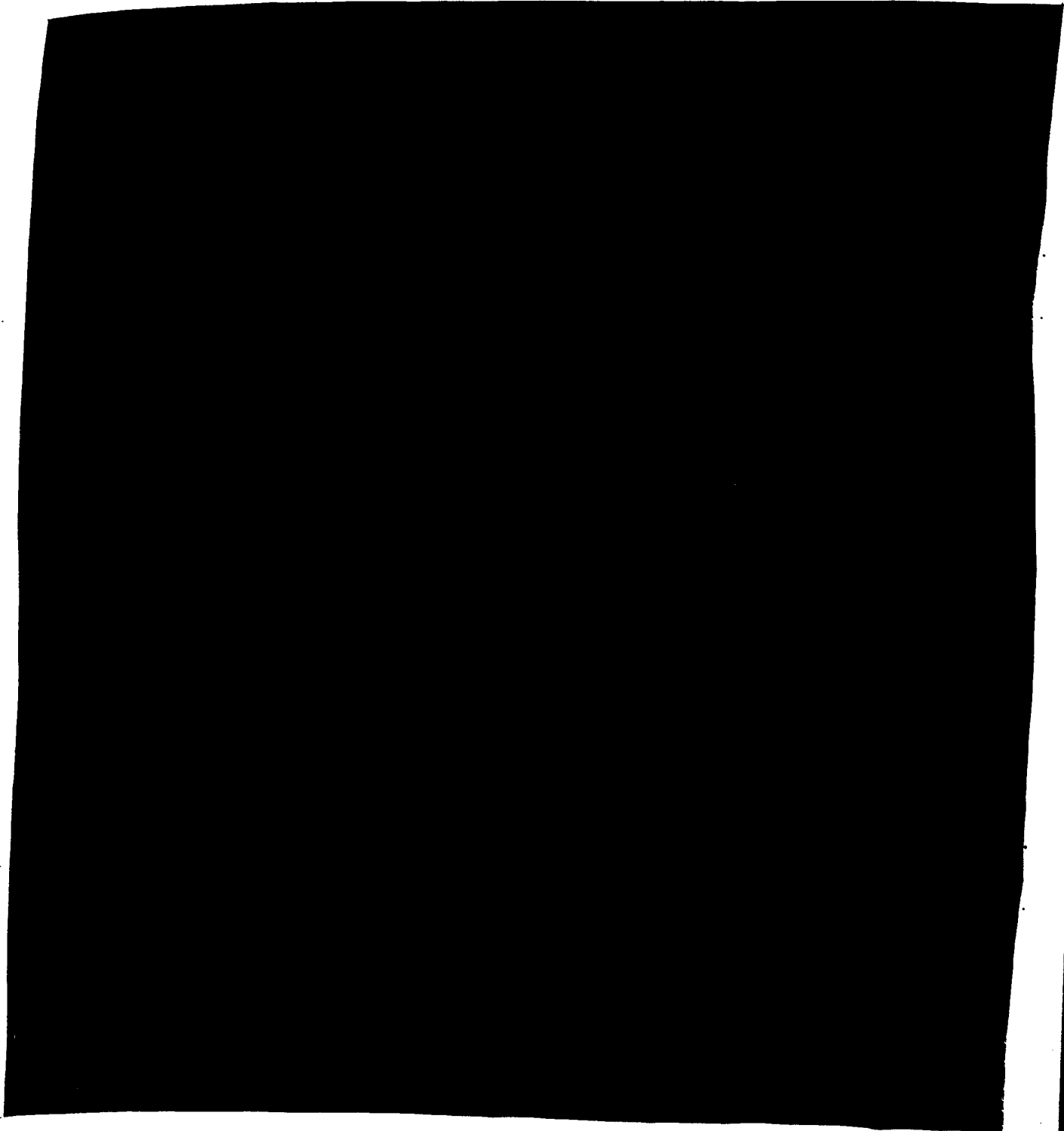
Following the declaration of martial law on 20 May, the Chinese leadership disappeared from public view. Their absence produced a series of rumors that underline the confusion characterizing the crisis as well as reflecting popular attitudes about the leadership. Those mentioned most often in these rumors were the leaders whose removal the crowd wanted:

- *Li Peng: rumored to be shot on 5 June by a young officer whose girlfriend and sister supposedly had been killed on Tiananmen Square the day before. This was later found to be a deliberate hoax fabricated by a Chinese student. Li was also reported "not to be in his right mind" due to the stresses of the crisis.*
- *Deng Xiaoping: rumored on 24 May and again immediately after the 4 June massacre to be hospitalized for "heart failure" or a kidney condition. Deng was also reported to have died of cancer on 5 June and again during the first week of August 1989. In both cases, the official Chinese press was forced publicly to refute the rumors.* [REDACTED]

press also reported trips by senior Chinese officials to the provinces—probably to drum up support and to inform local officials about Beijing's assessment of the crisis. [REDACTED]

The regime's efforts to rally support continued to meet with resistance from members of the elite. On 20 May, according to Hong Kong and Western press, "100 high-ranking officials" sent a letter to the party Standing Committee calling the students "patriotic," an indirect criticism of martial law. Two days later, the NPC Standing Committee almost unanimously, according to the Hong Kong press, expressed its opposition to martial law. Several retired military leaders, and more than 100 active military officers—which Hong Kong and Western press reported included Minister of Defense Qin Jiwei and commander of

~~Confidential~~



~~Confidential~~

~~Confidential~~

the Beijing Military Region, Zhou Yibing—also informed Deng of their opposition to using troops against the demonstrators. None of these people had any impact beyond alerting Deng and the hardliners of the danger they posed. [REDACTED]

From the outset of martial law, the hardliners went after the press and propaganda sectors, both of which they saw as either out of control or in unsympathetic hands. During the first two days of martial law, the Hong Kong press reported that the regime had formed a "press guidance group." It was composed of party hardliners—Li Peng was chairman, and its members included State Council spokesman Yuan Mu, Vice Minister of the State Education Commission He Dongchang, and Beijing party propaganda chief Li Zhijian. Hu Qili was replaced as party propaganda chief by hardliner Wang Rengzhi, who himself had been removed by Zhao in 1987. [REDACTED]

Cruder methods were used against individual media operations. Military troops occupied the offices of *People's Daily* and China Central Television (CCTV) on 21 May. The paper's coverage of the situation the following day, however, appeared split between the reform and conservative lines. Three days later, on the 24th, the regime announced that censors would be assigned to all newspaper offices. By then, all press except the English language *China Daily* were reported in the Hong Kong press as being under regime control. In addition, foreign satellite transmissions from Beijing were stopped (for the second time in a week) at midnight on the 24th, and troops occupied the offices of Beijing Telegraph, the Central Broadcasting Station, and Radio Beijing. Thus, by the end of the first week of martial law, the media and propaganda sectors, which had provided a platform for Zhao and his supporters, were under hardline control. [REDACTED]

The hardliners signaled their ascendancy and legitimized their tactics during a three-day "closed" expanded Politburo meeting held 23-26 May at Xishan in the western suburbs of Beijing. The attendees included more than 100 "leading party, government, and army leaders." According to Hong Kong press, this meeting approved the restructuring of the party's propaganda and press sectors, supported the hard line

taken against the demonstrators, and designated Deng and party elders Chen Yun, Peng Zhen, and Li Xiannian as the party leaders empowered to deal with the students. The meeting was dominated by the hardliners—Yang Shangkun and Li Peng gave the major speeches, for example. Although the meeting lasted until the 26th, it was essentially over a day earlier, when Li Peng reappeared in public greeting three Third World ambassadors. That day, the State Council issued a circular ordering a halt to student travel to Beijing. [REDACTED]

The actual decisions, however, were made elsewhere. On 20 May, according to Hong Kong press accounts, the "old guard" met to decide whether to place Zhao under house arrest. Among those reported as attending were Deng, Li Peng, Qiao Shi, and Wang Zhen. Prior to the opening of the Xishan meeting on 23-26 May, a smaller preparatory group—composed of Central Committee members in Beijing, the Central Advisory Commission (headed by Chen Yun), and the party's Central Discipline Inspection Commission (headed by Qiao Shi)—met to plan the Xishan meeting's agenda. The Hong Kong press stated that Deng apparently spoke at this meeting and then left, possibly for Wuhan to ensure military support for confronting the demonstrators. On the 26th, CCTV televised a speech by Chen Yun before the Central Advisory Commission Standing Committee, in which he expressed support for his protege Li Peng and urged the party to "expose the plot" against it. [REDACTED]

The regime, faced with the unwillingness of units from the 38th Group Army to press through the crowds blocking its progress toward Tiananmen Square, redoubled its efforts to keep the military in line. Deng's trip to Wuhan on 22 May probably had that goal—as well as ensuring the military's allegiance to him personally. In addition, while the Xishan meeting was under way, someone—probably Deng or Yang Shangkun—called an expanded, emergency meeting of the party Central Military Commission on 24 May, according to the official press. Again,

~~Confidential~~



Figure 7. 3 June. Troops move to clear the Square.

the reason for the meeting was probably to convince an uncertain military that a crackdown probably requiring armed force was necessary to save China from anarchy. Yang Shangkun spoke at this meeting, outlining Zhao's "crimes" against the party and people and discussing the threat the demonstrators posed to the country. On the 25th, a Central Committee document was sent to military units around the country, stating that Zhao had headed an antiparty clique and urging the PLA to be ready to support martial law. At this time, the Beijing Military Region finally publicly supported martial law.

While agreeing to crack down on the demonstrators, the leadership remained undecided on how to handle Zhao and his supporters. Initially, they took a hard line. Yang Shangkun's speech at the 22 May expanded Politburo meeting, for example, claimed that Zhao's actions gave the impression that the party had "two headquarters." The next day, at the Xishan meeting, Zhao—who may or may not have attended—was charged with orchestrating the student un-

rest. On 24 May, Li Peng, Yang Shangkun, and Li Ximing accused Zhao of heading an "antiparty clique" and engaging in "conspiracy." Following the end of the Xishan meeting, according to the Hong Kong press, the leadership informed "persons in charge" in the military that Zhao and his antiparty clique would be dealt with at a party plenum the following week.

For the next several days, the press gave full play to attacks on Zhao and his supporters. NPC cadres were urged to study Li Peng's and Yang Shangkun's speeches made at Xishan. The media touted Li Xian-nian's speech at the 27 May meeting of the China People's Political Consultation Conference (CPPCC), in which he stated the CPPCC supported Deng and Li against "individuals in leading organs" who were "one major cause" of the demonstrations. The leadership also distributed a Central Committee circular outlining Zhao's crimes. The newspapers on the 27th also highlighted a Chen Yun speech critical of Zhao. Wan

~~Confidential~~



...but meet resistance.

Li reappeared and backed Li Peng. Finally, on 28 May, provincial leaders were brought to Beijing for a one-day "central work conference" to hear the party line on Zhao.

But the campaign against Zhao did not go as planned. The party plenum, which the Hong Kong press reported was scheduled for 29 May, was not held. Stories surfaced the same day that the accusations against Zhao were being softened. A 30 May enlarged Politburo meeting at Xishan—which some press accounts state was attended by Deng and Chen Yun—was apparently unable to agree on the exact nature of the charges against Zhao. This meeting may have been the one that rescheduled the party plenum, which the Chinese press stated was now set for 5 June.

Parallel with the efforts against Zhao, the leadership began planning its moves against the demonstrators. On 28 May, the Hong Kong press reported that the government was forming "investigation groups" to identify party members involved in the demonstra-

tions. The next day, hardline party elder Peng Zhen, in a televised speech before the Standing Committee of the NPC, condemned the students. There was, according to the Hong Kong press, a meeting of the regional military commanders in the Beijing area on 31 May, probably under Yang Shangkun. According to some press reports, some commanders declined to come. This was followed the next day by a meeting of the old guard chaired by Chen Yun. On 3 June, the Beijing municipal committee issued a statement "recognizing the essence of the turmoil" and the "necessity of martial law," and claiming that a "small group" was causing the problems.

The leadership met again on the evening of 3 June to complete plans for attacking the demonstrators. The meeting, possibly another enlarged Politburo meeting, was chaired by Li Peng and Yang Shangkun. Among those reported by the Hong Kong press to have attended were "many ministers," officers from the

~~Confidential~~

~~Confidential~~

PLA General Logistics Department [REDACTED]

"various" army commanders, and Li Ximing and some of his Beijing apparatus [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Deng did, however, sign the order drafted by Li and Yang sending troops into the square, according to the Hong Kong press [REDACTED]

Information about Deng's whereabouts between 24 May and his appearance in public on 9 June is conflicting. One Hong Kong press report has him suffering a heart attack on 28 May and being hospitalized for a week after that. Another has him at Lushan in Jiangxi province between 1-6 June. Both reports place him outside Beijing during the period around the massacre and are suspect for that reason. He is also reported in the Hong Kong press to have been at the enlarged Politburo meeting on 30 May at Xishan. Unless he was physically incapacitated, however, Deng's performance during the weeks leading up to the massacre supports the theory that he knew about and probably ordered the 3-4 June crackdown. [REDACTED]

During this period, the regime continued to pour troops into the area around Beijing. We are unclear, however, whether bringing in so many units from outside Beijing was because of leadership uncertainty over the reliability of some units of the 38th Group Army—some of whom did storm Tiananmen—or the leadership's desire to have all military region commanders demonstrate their support of the regime and be identified with the massacre. [REDACTED]

This period also witnessed the public return of the hardliners and the open shift of all real decisionmaking to informal channels. No party Standing Committee meetings were held, and the enlarged Politburo meetings were convened mainly to achieve acquiescence on the part of senior officials to decisions made by the inner party circle, which probably was composed at this time of Deng, Yang, the hardliners on the Standing Committee, and the old guard. We believe the leadership certainly had to spend a considerable amount of time and energy on convincing the military to agree to—or on negotiating the political price of its involvement in—the final use of force against the population of Beijing. [REDACTED]

~~Confidential~~

4-24 June: Unreason Triumphant

The now ascendant hardline leadership spent most of this period consolidating its power and punishing its enemies. The regime finally held the party plenum, which registered publicly Zhao's downfall. The now-captive press put out the party line about the massacre, dissidents outside the party were identified and rounded up, and the leadership strove to demonstrate its unity to the outside world. The major immediate question for the regime was not how to cope with the international opprobrium it earned for the massacre, but what exactly to do with Zhao and the reform wing of the party, and who to reward for their involvement in the "successful" termination of the party struggle and the larger crisis on Tiananmen Square.

The first several days following the massacre were dominated by military action, and any political activity was confined largely to disseminating the regime's version of events. On 4 June, the *People's Liberation Army Daily* printed an editorial supporting the massacre. The next day, a joint Central Committee-State Council letter justified the crackdown as saving China from a "gang of counterrevolutionaries" who were conducting an "antiparty traitorous plot to aid bourgeois liberalization." A State Council statement on Chinese Central Television the same day essentially repeated these charges, as did *People's Daily*.

The regime also made efforts to project a return to normalcy. On 6 June, Xinhua reported that Li Peng had presided over a State Council meeting on economic affairs. Yao Yilin and Tian Jiyun—the latter rumored earlier to have been removed as a Zhao supporter—were also reported in attendance. The same day, Foreign Minister Qian Qichen left for his scheduled visit to Latin America. Li Peng and Wang Zhen appeared in public on 8 June, visiting the troops in Beijing. The provinces, however, were slow to express their support. During the first several days, only six of China's 30 provinces made statements backing Li Peng and the military crackdown.

The leadership then began moving against its opponents. On 7 June, the party Central Disciplinary Inspection Commission, in a televised statement, called for "severe punishment" for party members who took part in the "chaos." The State Education



Figure 8. 9 June. Deng reappears and congratulates his generals.

Commission on the next day ordered students to resume class, "observe regulations," and expose activists. Two Beijing organizations, the unofficial student union and an unauthorized labor union, were banned, and authorities began arresting people in Beijing and several outlying cities. More recently, party leaders have emphasized the need for more political education for the students, and the Hong Kong press reported the start of intense political and military indoctrination classes.

With the resurfacing of Deng Xiaoping on 9 June—in the company of the Military Affairs Commission and members of the old guard—the regime signalled its victory. Most of the other provinces and the seven military regions quickly printed their expressions of support. Deng's address to the martial law troops that day was later cited as a document for study. On 20 June, Li Peng said in a televised statement that the "rebellion" was "basically over."

Still, the question of what to do with Zhao and his supporters remains. The plenum scheduled for 5 June was finally held on 23-24 June. Zhao lost all his party posts, and his case is still under investigation. Zhao's allies in the party Standing Committee and the

~~Confidential~~



Figure 9. Tanks in Tiananmen Square.

Secretariat have been removed. Recent statements in the official Chinese press from the old guard—through its Central Advisory Commission—and from Qiao Shi's party security apparatus appear to indicate that the regime is shifting its emphasis from rounding up students and intellectuals to restoring party discipline and scouring out the pockets of Zhao supporters within the party itself.

The leadership, forced by events to concentrate its attention on its military and public security efforts, finally turned to party problems in mid-June. The regime convened the plenum and a preparatory meeting of the enlarged Politburo on 19-21 June. The results of the plenum, however, show that the struggle is not over. A complete listing of Politburo membership has not been announced. No one was nominated to fill Zhao's seat on the pivotal Military Affairs

Commission Standing Committee. Finally, Zhao's continued political limbo, and the almost daily public discussions about what to do with him or what to accuse him of, also appears to indicate that the leadership, now that it has weathered the immediate crisis, is no more united than before.

~~Confidential~~

(EST PUB DATE) THE ROAD TO THE TIANANMEN CRACKDOWN: AN ANALYTIC CHRONOLOGY OF C



Welcome to the new CIA Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Electronic Reading Room. Be sure to bookmark this site, and note that our former URL will be decommissioned in the near future.

Document Type: FOIA

Collection: FOIA Collection

Document Number (FOIA) /ESDN (CREST): 0000324331

Release Decision:

Original Classification: U

Document Page Count: 24

Sequence Number:

Case Number:

Publication Date: August 5, 1989

File:

Attachment	Size
------------	------

 DOC_0000324331.pdf	1.1 MB
--	--------

 Printer-friendly version	
--	--