

# 毋忘天安門 Remember

# TIAN

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**"Go back to your classes. Don't give in to pressure from your fellow students. Beware of the consequences to you and your family."**

That was the message that students at Peking University heard over loud speakers each day at the beginning of May. It was an ominous, if understated, warning of events to come that spring - a spring that would leave thousands of Chinese students and their pro-democratic supporters dead and bloodied in the streets of Beijing.

That stark threat from the loudspeakers was repeated regularly as students gathered for their daily pilgrimage to Tianamen Square, in the heart of China's capital. The messages had little effect. Fledgling protests marking the April 15 death of former Communist Party boss He Yaobang, purged from the party himself after allowing similar protest in 1987, soon grew into the country's largest protest movement since Mao's People's Revolution.

By late May, more than 3,000 hunger-strikers and one million demonstrators had joined the protest in Beijing. More were reported in Shanghai and Hangzhou province.

Originally, the students had demanded only dialogue with the Communist Party's Central Committee. Later, demands grew - freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom of travel and freedom to choose their own jobs without direction from the party.

As rumors of a government crackdown persisted, nervous Western media provided hourly reports of the increasingly tense situation in the capital.



**Deng Xiaoping**  
The 89-year-old top party chief.



**Li Peng**  
The 60-year-old Prime Minister



**Zhao Ziyang**  
70-year-old moderate party leader who appears to have lost his title.

Unarmed units of the People's Liberation Army attempted to close off the avenues leading to the square, but were gently turned back by pro-democratic supporters bent on protecting the hunger-striking students.

Supporters greeted army trucks with cries, "The People's Police loves the people and the people love the People's Police."

"Since Mao's revolution, there was a tradition that the PLA was there to help the people. There was a strong belief that the army would never shoot on its own people," says Dr. Larry Shyu, a University of New Brunswick history professor who was born and raised in China.

On June 4, seven weeks after the non-violent demonstrations began, they were brutally crushed. The power struggle between the de facto leader Deng Xiaoping, conservative Li Peng and reformer Zhao Ziyang was over and Deng wanted the demonstrations stopped. Two weeks earlier, he had been humiliated before the world during the Sino-Soviet summit when Mikhail Gorbachev was forced to cancel some of his visit to avoid the protests in Tianamen Square.

Troops armed with AK-47's at the ready prepared themselves on the roof of Mao's mausoleum and tanks matter of factly crushed resisters as they rolled up Changan Avenue - Avenue of Eternal Peace.

As the world watched, Chinese troops opened fire on the unarmed protestors, killing as many as 3,600 according to the Red Cross. Later estimates placed the number of victims at 6,000. The televised pictures sent shock waves through every corner of the planet, including Fredericton where Chinese students studying at UNB sat and watched their countrymen slain in cold blood.

"I can't describe what I felt," says one UNB student who asked that his name not be disclosed (called Mr. P.). "It was against everything we believed in. It's something so bad you just can't find the words. I was in shock. At first we were sad, then we got mad. Later we just cried. Many of us have family there and we just can't speak out; but, in private we express our anger."

Almost immediately, the Chinese government began suppressing the truth. Chinese television carried no pictures of the massacre and insisted no blood was spilt in Tianamen Square. According to internal news reports, protesters were simply counter-revolutionaries and hooligans.

Foreign media were banned from broadcasting out of China. In an ironic twist of history, the foreign media who remained, risking their own lives to cover the story, became accomplices of the Central Committee. Pictures from CBS and CNN were used to round up student leaders.

Some of those found were executed; others were exiled to far-flung provinces or thrown into re-education programs.

"Once they killed us, what more could they do? We have seen re-education in the past - during Mao. We are familiar with that. We are not afraid of that," says Mr. P.



ABOVE: M  
universities



ABOVE: A lone Chinese student stands strong against government tanks. RIGHT: The Statue of Liberty in Tiananmen Sq. - the students' democratic symbol.