

you do have to believe it's not off the agenda.

Okay, non-violent democratic revolution doesn't always work. This is not a perfect chain of successes. But remember this: in May and June 1989 in China, they almost managed to democratize not just a dictatorship but a Marxist totalitarian state by non-violence. And they knew exactly what kind of ground they were breaking. I have spoken to a number of people who organized the Tienanmen Square demonstrations (because of course these things do not spring from nothing), and they told me that there was a great deal of groundwork done, particularly in the high schools and universities in Beijing, in the preceding couple of years. They told me, "Look, in '87, '88 we were looking at the videos of what was going on in Seoul and Bangkok and what had gone on in Manila. We were reading Martin Luther King. We were studying Gandhi. We were trying to figure out whether you could transpose these tactics and experiences to the situation we find ourselves in, whether they could still work in the context of Chinese culture in a totalitarian Marxist regime."

So in the spring of 1989 the Chinese students took their hypothesis out and they road-tested it and it didn't work, alas, though it came close. But six months later almost to the day, it did work in Berlin. And the citizens in Berlin who brought the Wall down had all watched the events in Beijing on television six months before. It was on West German television, but of course everybody in East Berlin saw it.

The cascade of non-violent revolutions that brought down the communist regimes throughout Eastern Europe between November 1989 and December 1991 (when even the old Soviet Union itself finally went under) was directly stimulated by and modelled on the Asian experience of the preceding years. It's probably the first time Asia has given the political lead to Europe in 300 years.

And just to complete the chain of causation: by 1994, such is the power of example transmitted by the global media, even South Africa was able to democratize, to move to a non-racial one-person, one-vote democracy, without a revolution. I have been told by people quite close to the South African secret police that just as de Klerk came to power in late 1989 the South African secret police went to him and said: "Mr. President, you know the footage you saw on the television last night about Ceaucescu on the balcony." (Do you remember the Romanian dictator on the balcony, the mob in the square about to deliver their usual adulation, and then it turns out they want to lynch him, not congratulate him? And the stunned look on his face, and he's dead within 24 hours.) The South African secret police said, "Mr. President, if the ANC [African National Congress] pulls that, puts a mob like that out on the street in Johannesburg, then we will have to kill 10 000 people under the television cameras or quit. So start negotiating." And he did.

Something is going on here. Not only are parts of the world that don't have a