

APPENDIX 7

Recent Political Disturbances in China (April-July 1989)

BACKGROUND

In April 1989, demonstrations by students and workers demanding greater democratic freedoms, and an end to Government corruption, began in Beijing's Tian'anmen Square. On 18 April 1989, several thousand students marched through the capital chanting democratic slogans and singing revolutionary songs as they mourned the death of Hu Yaobang, the Communist Party leader who was forced to resign in 1987 after "hardliners" criticized him for failing to suppress student demonstrations in late 1986 and 1987. Defying a Government ban on public protests, on 22 April 1989, more than 100,000 people gathered in Tian'anmen Square and marched through the streets of Beijing demanding greater press freedoms, and freedom of speech. A march held on 20 April followed a Government rejection of student conditions for talks.

On 13 May, about 2000 students began a hunger strike at Tian'anmen Square. On 4 May, an unannounced Politburo meeting had reportedly endorsed the views of Communist Party leader Zhao Ziyang, which included calls for discussions with the students and limited steps toward greater democracy. On 15 May, with the arrival of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev in Beijing, hunger strikers camping out in Tian'anmen Square refused to end their vigil. Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng issued a warning to protesters on 19 May, but agreed to a key student demand by arranging a nationally televised meeting with leaders of the students' pro-democracy movement. Li and Communist Party leader Zhao Ziyang visited the 3000 hunger strikers at the Square.

On 20 May, the Government called on army troops to move into Beijing, imposing martial law in parts of the city. With one million people in the streets defying martial law, troops were prevented from reaching the Central Square. Zhao Ziyang was stripped of all power, retaining only his title of Communist Party General Secretary. On 25 May, upon orders from Prime Minister Li Peng, Chinese troops encircled Beijing. Chinese student leaders were ready to end their two-week occupation of Tian'anmen Square, but reiterated their demands for greater democratic freedoms and the resignation of Li Peng.

On 2 June, thousands of students and workers turned back more than 2000 unarmed troops who were marching toward Tian'anmen Square. On 3 June, violent confrontations began as troops beat dozens of protesters before retreating. On 4 June, tens of thousands of Chinese troops took back Tian'anmen Square from the pro-democracy protesters. Chinese witnesses and Western intelligence reports stated that up to 3000 people, mostly civilians, were killed. Western diplomatic sources in Beijing said the number of deaths was "in the thousands". The area around Tian'anmen Square was completely sealed off by troops. Accounts of extreme brutality by soldiers, against persons in the Square, began to surface.

After the Tian'anmen Square massacre, Chinese troops fanned out in Beijing in a search for the pro-democracy protest leaders. On 9 June 1989, Deng Xiaoping, China's senior leader, appeared on Chinese television with a group of nine other top Government officials and commended the army for its role in the crushing of the protest movement. On 10 June, the Government announced that it had arrested more than 400 participants in the movement, including leaders of unofficial student and labour organizations. China's national news service showed scenes of protest leaders being arrested throughout China. The following day, a Government spokesman stated that Zhao Ziyang would become the