

TIANANMEN AND CHINA'S PEACEFUL RISE

BY HU PING

The Chinese government's intransigence regarding June 4th raises the question of whether China's increasing dominance constitutes a possible threat to world peace. Intensifying efforts to implement democratic reform in China is the best way to prevent further harm to China's people and potentially to the rest of the world.

Killing 200,000 to bring 20 years of stability

Fifteen years have passed since "June 4th." On the surface, today's China seems to present many obvious and subtle traces of struggle, but there is still no perceptible implementation of democratic reform or a reassessment of June 4th. In civil society, although we can see and hear many expressions of discontent and a great deal of criticism, even quite a bit of open protest, we still see no sign of a wide-scale movement demanding freedom and democracy. In facing this kind of China, it's hard not to recall a horrible curse: "Kill 200,000 for 20 years of stability."

This saying has been attributed to Deng Xiaoping, and also to Chen Yun, and even to some princeling or other. We have no way of ascertaining who actually said it. We don't even have any way of ascertaining whether anyone in the Chinese Communist Party's top leadership ever said it. But we can believe that they are capable of saying it, because it is a true expression of their mentality, their logic. A recently deceased member of the Gang of Four, Zhang Chunqiao, said something along the same lines a long time ago. In a journal entry in 1976 he wrote, "How do we preserve power? By killing."

Of course, a saying such as "Kill 200,000 for 20 years of stability" is not going to be found in any official transcripts or records. The officially recorded equivalent, "Stability above all else," appears much more refined and civilized, with no taint of bloodshed, but there's not a single person in China who cannot understand its implication. Chinese Communist rule was established through violence. The CCP itself is of course clear on this point, and has made it clear to the Chinese people as well, but it has never explained the implications in a

straightforward manner to the people. The naked embrace of violence is too embarrassing; it must be exquisitely cloaked. The particular elegance of this cloak is in its ability to both conceal and reveal, in the manner of sexy lingerie. It has to reveal enough to avoid the absence of fear, but also conceal enough to avoid instilling shame. Human beings are animals, and as such they fear violence; at the same time, human beings possess self-respect, and for that reason they find it hard to accept their own open capitulation in the face of violence. Just as a tyranny has to rationalize its brutality, the people also need to rationalize their submission. That's why violence presented in a glossed-over fashion is most effective.

It must be pointed out that the June 4th Massacre was not sufficient to accomplish the terror of the past 15 years. The preservation of "stability" has required constant persecution and suppression. Over the past 15 years, the Chinese Communist government has incessantly suppressed popular movements, imprisoning and banishing at will. It has brutally persecuted practitioners of Falungong and other alternative beliefs, assaulting people as a matter of course and killing with impunity. The authorities have gone as far as keeping former Party Secretary Zhao Ziyang under strict house arrest over the past 15 years, and even detaining and arresting family members of the victims of June 4th. The CCP refers to this as "nip-ping all factors of instability in the bud."

Two points of clarification

I would like here to clear up a long-standing misconception. Many people, when comparing the reforms in China with those in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, observe that in Russia and Eastern Europe political reform preceded economic reform, while in China economic reform has preceded political reform. This point of view is fundamentally unsubstantiated. The essential difference between the path of reform in China as opposed to Russia and Eastern Europe lies in one question: When facing wave after wave of popular movements for freedom and democracy, do you suppress it or not; do you kill people or not. The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the dramatic transformation of the Eastern Bloc are attributable to the single fact that the Communist Party in those countries was not willing to kill its own people.

Sometimes we say the Chinese Communist Party should

begin carrying out political reform, which sounds like we're calling on the Party to do something. In fact, we're not asking the Party to do something, but rather not to do something. What we want is for the Party to cease political persecution and to stop arresting and suppressing people who profess alternative political views or religious beliefs—that would be sufficient.

There is another point of clarification that cannot be neglected here. Quite a few people say that China's democratic reforms are gradual, not radical. That's not true. It should be clear that as far as democratic reform is concerned, some questions can be divided into gradual or radical. Taking elections as an example, it is possible to allow open elections at the local level, and then later at the national level, or to hold open elections for some positions and later on for all. This can be regarded as gradual progress. But there are other questions to which the terms "gradual" and "radical" do not apply. For example, freedom of expression, which would require eradicating crimes related to expression and the release of prisoners of conscience. To simply reduce the number of people arrested for thought crime cannot be considered gradual progress. In general, instances of political persecution carried out by authoritarian governments will always vary in number. A reduction doesn't necessarily indicate that the rulers have become more enlightened, but rather that the populace has been subjugated. Once a government has killed enough people to establish its dominance, further killings are no longer necessary. For that reason, we should not automatically regard any reduction in persecution as a sign of the success of gradual progress in democratization.

Of course, this point may be irrelevant. The horrifying fact is that in the 15 years following June 4th, the number of people persecuted for their political or religious convictions is far greater than the number in the years before June 4th. For that reason, there is absolutely no reason for us to say that China has engaged in gradual democratization after June 4th. It should be said further that because the democratic camp is so weak, it can only make infinitesimal progress. This tactic can be called gradual progress. But as far as those in power are concerned, to "put down one's butcher knife and become a Buddha" is a matter of a change of attitude, and doesn't involve the question of gradual versus radical. Put simply, in the 15 years since June 4th, the Chinese Communist Party has shown no indication of relaxing its insistent use of political persecution. There is absolutely no basis for saying that the government is making gradual progress in the direction of democratization.

Can mainland China duplicate Taiwan's path?

While today's China is undergoing a comprehensive process of market reform and rapid economic development, the Communist regime remains a one-party dictatorship; political persecution is as brutal as ever, and political democratization is still being put off. This combination of liberal economics and political authoritarianism is reminiscent of the path taken by Taiwan, South Korea, the Philippines and Indonesia a few decades ago. A *New York Times* article on a report given at the 16th Party Congress¹ stated that China has been

transformed from the world's last left-wing dictatorship to its last right-wing dictatorship.

This leads many people to ask: now that the Chinese Communist regime has become a right-wing dictatorship, will it be like Taiwan or South Korea, which turned democratic after a long period of reform, or will it be like the Marxist government of the Philippines or like Indonesia under Suharto, which collapsed as a result of economic stagnation and corruption?

Considering the particular way in which the Chinese Communist regime has been transformed into a right-wing dictatorship, and the fact that today's China displays both totalitarian and post-totalitarian characteristics, it's worth pointing out that the CCP is not the Kuomintang (KMT). Consequently, mainland China is very unlikely to follow Taiwan's path.

First of all, the KMT identified from the beginning with the principles of constitutional government and democracy, and considered authoritarian government to be an expedient measure. Therefore, KMT members could always legitimately and confidently demand the implementation of constitutional government and democracy in the knowledge that justice was on their side. It was much the same in South Korea, the Philippines and Indonesia. Even Pinochet's junta in Chile could not reject the principle of constitutional democracy, and was forced to consider itself a transitional government. Thus, under right-wing authoritarian governments the forces of democracy always have a certain amount of room to exist.

In mainland China, on the other hand, the CCP has never recognized the principle of constitutional democracy. The Party has always declared its opposition to "Western-style democracy," and calls within the CCP for constitutional democracy have always been "illegitimate" and "improper." The KMT opened the gates to democracy as soon as circumstances permitted. But for the CCP to introduce democracy, it would have to swim against the tide and rely on oppositionists among the people and within the Party. Under the KMT, the more the economy developed, the more social stability there was, and the less reason the government had to delay the introduction of constitutional democracy. The CCP, on the other hand, always attributed whatever achievements it may have scored to the fact that the PRC was a one-party dictatorship, and therefore considered the strengthening of the dictatorship to be a foundation for further achievements. Because China has experienced rapid economic growth in the 15 years since June 4th, when its Communist rulers speak of the crackdown, they are more confident than ever that they did the right thing. Unless the Communist regime encounters a serious economic or social crisis, it will certainly not strike out on a new path.

Second, before Taiwan, South Korea, the Philippines and Indonesia democratized, they had systems of private ownership and market economies, which they retained after they became democracies. Consequently, they did not face the problems that come with economic reform. In these countries democratization was simply a matter of putting an end to political persecution, opening up the political system and bringing about political reconciliation.

In mainland China, circumstances are altogether different. Communist China was a planned economy with public ownership of the means of production, and the country has yet to complete its reform from a state-owned to a free-market economy. Moreover, unlike the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, which carried out economic reform in tandem with political reform, the CCP is adamant that economic reform must be carried out under a system of one-party rule. In the absence of even the most basic form of popular control or participation, China's privatization is inevitably carried out by and for the elite. Cliques wielding power and influence brazenly plunder public property on a massive scale. Although China's economic reform has produced two decades of economic growth, it has also resulted in unprecedented brutality, injustice and social ills. The corruption plaguing China today far exceeds what was formerly experienced not only in Taiwan and South Korea, but even in the Philippines and Indonesia. What's more, the nature of corruption in the PRC is a hundred times worse than in the Philippines and Indonesia. As I pointed out earlier, the CCP began by eradicating the private system of property and confiscating private property by violent means, and later used violence to turn public property into private property. Over the past 50 years, the same Party has engaged in two diametrically opposed instances of wide scale plunder. It's fair to say that the PRC is a hundred times worse than Indonesia under Suharto.

The "Chinese miracle" and the "Chinese model"

To be sure, since the policy of reform and opening up to the world was first launched, China has experienced astonishing economic growth. Some people speak of a "Chinese miracle" or "Chinese model." In the final analysis, the "Chinese model" means a market economy developed under a one-party dictatorship. Why has a one-party dictatorship pursuing market economic been able to produce a "Chinese miracle"? The main reasons are outlined below.

First of all, because China remains a one-party dictatorship, the government can ignore public opinion and do as it pleases in implementing its reforms. If it wants to raise prices, it can just go ahead and raise them, and if it wants to lay people off, it can just do it. When a state-owned enterprise wants to buy a commodity at a certain price, it can buy it at that price. Without any opposition or checks and balances, the government wields formidable repressive force and can implement its policy decisions at will.

Second, because China remains a one-party dictatorship, the government can nip the slightest sign of instability in the bud (e.g., by banning independent labor unions), and thus achieve a high level of social stability. Because the government is unchallenged and is never replaced in elections, it can exert enormous control over economic activity. Government action is also very consistent and predictable, which enables it to attract plentiful foreign investment and to limit the impact of international economic volatility on the Chinese economy.

Even more significantly, because China's economic reform is being carried out by a one-party dictatorship, Chinese officials have caught on to the fact that the reform provides them with ample opportunity to line their pockets. Government

officials are therefore very supportive of the reforms. They brazenly arrogate public property to themselves, and are all too keen to accomplish privatization of the economy. Party committee secretaries have metamorphosed into capitalists, and are consequently more dedicated than ever to profitability and economic development. Given the collusion between those with power and those with money, the more power someone has, the more capital he can accumulate in short order. This enables the rich and the powerful to set up big companies and to privatize large state-owned enterprises, which is beneficial to overall economic development.

Furthermore, because China remains a one-party dictatorship, many domains, particularly politics, are off-limits, which forces many more people than would otherwise be the case to go into business. Unprecedented spiritual emptiness and greed also add fuel to the fire of economic development.

Privatization's fatal flaw

The "Chinese economic miracle" is a dazzling phenomenon that causes most people to ignore or underestimate the internal crisis of the "Chinese model." The lopsidedness of China's economic development is obvious to all, but most people don't think that it is an irremediable problem. For example, people in general believe that provided the economy grows fast enough, the wide gap between rich and poor will be narrowed and the underprivileged will see their living standards rise. It is also widely assumed that if the government raises taxes, it will be able to set up a social security system and reduce economic disparity. Moreover, many people think that the problem of corruption will be contained once the legal system is established and perfected. Since Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao assumed the reins of government, they have repeated over and over again that the weak and powerless need to be cared for and that corruption will be overcome by legal measures. This gives optimists even greater assurance.

The privatization of China's economy has one fatal flaw: it lacks any legitimacy whatsoever.

Even so, the privatization of China's economy has one fatal flaw: it lacks any legitimacy whatsoever. This fact is without precedent in China or abroad, and is therefore little understood by most people.

China's circumstances are totally different from Russia's and Eastern Europe's. Russia and Eastern Europe have had their share of problems in carrying out economic reform and the privatization of their economies, but they have done so under a system of public control and democratic participation, which means that the credibility of the government and the legal validity of the reforms have not been in any doubt. Although these countries have experienced numerous transfers of power over the past decade, property rights have been universally acknowledged and respected. So far, election victories have not been used to settle accounts, nor are they likely to be abused in this way in the future.

Circumstances could not be more different in China. Given that China's economic privatization is being carried out without public control and democratic participation, it is not recognized by the common people, and the establishment of property rights arising from it therefore lacks legitimacy. One of the peculiarities of China's economic reforms is that the government has consistently shifted responsibility for the disastrous results of the mistakes it has made in recent decades to the common people. Another peculiarity is that a great many government officials have taken credit for and misappropriated on a massive scale the wealth created by the labor and creativity of the people over several decades. For example, many people think that increasing taxes and setting up a social security system will lead to the elimination of economic disparity. This presupposes, however, that the rich obtain their wealth by clean and legal means. But in China it is common knowledge that the people who got rich first during the reforms, and especially the powerful cliques that got rich first, did so by illegal and underhanded means. Therefore the main question in China today is not how to raise taxes and set up a social security system, but rather how to return the wealth plundered by powerful and influential cliques to its rightful owners, the people.

Who has the right to declare an amnesty?

On January 1 of this year, the Hebei provincial Party committee issued an order declaring that after the statute of limitations runs out, the managers of privately run enterprises should not be prosecuted for crimes they committed when they first established their businesses. Discerning people will understand at a glance that this amnesty decree is meant for government officials rather than for private entrepreneurs. In fact, nine times out of ten, when private entrepreneurs engage in illegal activities to set up their business, they do so in collusion with influential government officials who take the lion's share of the proceeds. By decreeing an amnesty for its own officials, the government betrays its guilty conscience and fears that it will one day be brought to account.

In a dispute over a debt, only the creditor has the right to forgive the debt; the debtor has no such right. Communist officials use the power at their disposal to embezzle public property, and then issue orders in the name of the government to prevent an investigation and prosecution of their crimes. One is forced to ask: of what value are declarations made by criminals passing themselves off as judges?

Some may say that deals between those in power and those with money were unavoidable during the initial reform period, when property rights remained ill-defined. They argue that prosecuting every single case of malfeasance would hold back the economy, and that we have to look to the future, make compromises and avoid getting stuck in a legalistic rut. The question is not whether amnesties are legitimate and beneficial, but rather who has the right to declare them. Put another way, who has the authority to pardon criminal conduct? Public property misappropriated through the collusion of government officials and wealthy businessmen belongs to the people, therefore only the people have the right to issue amnesties, and only amnesties authorized by the people have binding force. In

short, such amnesties will only be legitimate once a transition to democratic participation and popular control has been achieved.

To be sure, putting constitutional democracy into practice does require us to put the past behind us and to be as forward-looking as possible. But it's also true that were it not for June 4th and the 15 years of tyranny that followed, corruption and economic disparity would not have reached the appalling levels we are experiencing today. If the CCP had adopted a policy of political reform and democratization early on, the people would have been more inclined to forgive and forget if a few powerful and influential people had gotten more than their fair share of the pie. They would have thought a little wheeling and dealing by the rich and powerful was the price to be paid for political reform. But corruption has been altogether disproportionate, and has thrived under the protection of brutal repression. How can the people be expected to exonerate those who oppress them and steal the wealth they have created? Admittedly, as long as the common people live under the thumb of despotic power and lack the right to speak their minds, all they can do is to suffer in silence, to try to get a piece of the action while they can, or to be satisfied with a few crumbs from the table of the rich and powerful. But once the people gain their democratic rights, will they remain so submissive?

How can the accounts be squared?

In the more than 50 years that the Chinese Communist government has been in power, it has incurred two major debts with the Chinese people. The first is a political debt, namely political persecution, and the second is an economic debt. On the economic front the Communists have run up two bills: the first was incurred during the violent eradication of the system of private property during the Maoist period, and the second during the privatization of public property by and for the elites in the course of economic reform. On point of principle, the political debt is more serious than the economic one, and its repayment is a necessary prerequisite to the settling of the economic debt. But in practical terms, repaying the economic debt will be even harder than repaying the political one.

First, in order to repay the political debt the regime would have to put an end to political persecution, rehabilitate and compensate the victims, and punish the perpetrators. The Communist totalitarian system became well known at the outset for wholesale political persecution, but in more recent times political persecution has become much smaller in scale. Although the number of politically persecuted people in today's China remains shocking, it nonetheless constitutes a small percentage of the population as a whole. In comparison, there are a great many more victims of economic corruption; in fact, they make up the majority of the population. Although China has experienced a real economic boom in recent years, even those who have seen their living standards rise are aware that they are the victims of economic corruption. And given the growing economic disparity, the poor feel their deprivation all the more intensely.

Second, generally speaking, very few people would be held

accountable for the political debt, because political persecution is the result of policy decisions at the highest levels of government, and the top leaders would bear the main responsibility for political persecution. Although lesser government officials take part in persecution, they are merely following orders and are therefore less likely to be criminally prosecuted. But economic crime is different. Although the system currently in place has opened wide the door to corruption, engaging in corruption is ultimately an individual choice. The higher authorities do not order officials to be corrupt, and every corrupt official is consequently responsible for his own actions. Therefore, the common people are likely to forgive those who took part in political persecution as part of their official duties, but they will not forgive corrupt officials. An investigation into crimes committed during June 4th would probably find only a few top leaders deserving of punishment. But to get to the root of economic corruption, one would have to call a great many officials to account. A few years ago there was a popular saying about corruption among government officials: "Executing all of them would possibly result in injustice, but executing only half would certainly let some get away." This saying illustrates the great number of economic criminals among officialdom, and the deep resentment they provoke in ordinary people.

The common people may forgive those who took part in political persecution as part of their official duties, but they will not forgive corrupt officials.

Third, a life is irreplaceable, but property is transferable. Violating a life or depriving someone of his youth is indisputably a far more serious offense than stealing valuables or misappropriating property. Political persecution is far more odious than economic crime. One reason is that property loss can be restituted or compensated, whereas there is no adequate restitution or compensation for loss of life. Lost property can be recovered, but the dead cannot be brought back to life. Moreover, if John Doe murders someone and then dies, one cannot ask John Doe's son to pay with his life for his father's crime. But if John Doe steals someone else's property and then passes it on to his son, after John Doe dies one can certainly demand that the son return the property to its rightful owner. The son cannot be made to pay for the crimes of the father, but he can be made to repay his father's debts (provided that he has inherited his father's ill-gotten gains, which happens all too often).

This leads us to a surprising conclusion: with the passage of time, cases of criminal wrongdoing in which innocent people have been taken into custody, imprisoned or murdered can no longer be prosecuted, and no substantive restitution can be made to the victims. Consequently, investigators and prosecutors usually drop such cases (or simply go through the motions of an investigation). But in the case of far less serious economic crimes, the culprits can be prosecuted and the victims given substantive compensation even after a long period of time has elapsed. For that reason, the victims of such cases

are unwilling to give up easily and insist on a thorough investigation, prosecution and settlement.

One can surmise that as the economy is reformed, the mass of the common people, including most of the weak and disadvantaged who are not getting a fair deal in the distribution of wealth, may well demand that the economic cards they were dealt be reshuffled, and that the economic injustices of the past be redressed. Redress for economic wrongs will require a great many government officials to be prosecuted and punished. The existing framework of distribution of wealth will undergo large-scale upheaval and a fundamental disruption, and it will be a very long time before a widely accepted and recognized new economic order can gradually be established. The economic chaos Russia and Eastern Europe experienced in the past will be dwarfed by what China will face in the future.

Two future scenarios

It should be clear by now why the intensification of China's economic reforms has not stimulated political reform, but rather the opposite. In fact, China's economic reforms have been nothing but an instrument for those with power and influence to plunder China with utter brazenness under the protection of the iron hand of Communist dictatorship. Consequently, the farther the economic reforms advance, the less amenable to political reform the wielders of power and influence become. Aware of the increasingly serious nature of social contradictions, the government has put forward a few measures meant to improve the situation of socially disadvantaged groups. But the government cannot be unaware that these measures are mere palliatives that treat the symptoms, not the disease. All the Chinese leadership hopes to achieve with these measures is to delay the most acute effects of these social contradictions, and to use "moderate coercion" as a means of achieving "sustainable exploitation."

We can well imagine the following scenario: the Communist regime will continue along the present path of elite privatization, passing the ordinary people only a mouthful of rice in the course of dividing the spoils, and continuing to rely on the modern state's machinery of oppression to nip any element of turmoil in the bud; and after a few generations, ill-gotten wealth and property will acquire a legitimacy of sorts. But considering that the average life expectancy is increasing and that the information age allows significant events to be recorded and reported with great accuracy, it is too much to expect that the people will forget or forgo restitution for the brazen plunder of the economy that is currently taking place in China, even after a hundred years have passed.

Two possibilities present themselves: First, if a serious crisis erupts during this period, the Communist repressive apparatus may malfunction, and all sorts of suppressed contradictions may erupt, plunging Chinese society into massive turmoil. Even if democratic mechanisms came into play under these circumstances, they would be unlikely to produce instant results. Second, if the Communist regime were to actually survive this long period of history, on the one hand reducing economic disparity and on the other slowly but surely legitimizing its ill-gotten wealth, it would end up showing

even greater contempt for human rights, democracy and justice. In such a scenario, we would face an even more overbearing and thus even more autocratic regime that would pose a serious threat to world liberty and peace. Clearly, either prospect is dreadful to contemplate, but the second one is particularly worrisome.

Can China's rise under a one-party dictatorship be peaceful?

Recently, the Communist regime has put forward a new slogan: the “peaceful rise of China.”² Following the latest session of the National People's Congress, Premier Wen Jiabao took questions from journalists and specifically addressed the issue of China's “peaceful rise.”³

Wen Jiabao said, “What are the elements of China's peaceful rise? Let me make the following points. Firstly, in promoting China's peaceful rise, we must take full advantage of the very good opportunity of world peace to endeavor to develop and strengthen ourselves, and at the same time safeguard world peace with our own development. Secondly, the rise of China can only be based on our own strength and on our independent, self-reliant and hard efforts. It also has to be based on China's broad domestic market, abundant human resources and capital reserves, as well as the rejuvenation of our systems as a result of reform. Thirdly, China's rise cannot be achieved without the rest of the world. We must always maintain the open-door policy and develop economic and trade exchanges with all friendly countries on the basis of equality and mutual benefit. Fourthly, China's rise will require a long period of time and probably the hard effort of many generations of Chinese people. Fifthly, the rise of China will not stand in the way of anyone or pose a threat to anyone or be achieved at the cost of anyone. China does not seek hegemony now, nor will we ever seek hegemony even after China becomes more powerful.”

The reader should note that Wen Jiabao was addressing his comments to a foreign audience. The “peace” in China's “peaceful rise” refers to international peace, world peace. It is especially important to understand that in his fifth point, “the rise of China will not stand in the way of anyone or pose a threat to anyone, or be achieved at the cost of anyone,” the “anyone” referred to is foreigners and most certainly does not include Chinese citizens. What Wen Jiabao is actually telling foreigners is, “The rise of China will not stand in the way of any foreigner or pose a threat to any foreigner or be achieved at the cost of any foreigner.” As for Chinese people, too bad—impediments, threats and sacrifice will be hard to avoid and even a matter of course. The rise of China will inevitably require impeding, threatening and demanding sacrifices from quite a few Chinese people.

China's “peaceful rise” refers only to international peace.

Wen Jiabao made this crystal clear in replying to a question by an Associated Press reporter regarding Dr. Jiang Yanyong's letter calling for a reassessment of June 4th.⁴ Wen Jiabao knows perfectly well that the victims of June 4th were neither “hooligans” nor “criminals,” but he persists in defending the June 4th massacre because it “successfully stabilized the general sit-

uation of reform and opening-up in China and safeguarded the cause of building socialism with Chinese characteristics.” In other words, for the sake of stability, for the sake of socialism with Chinese characteristics, it is sometimes unavoidable to shoot and kill—of course, only to kill Chinese, not foreigners; for that reason there is no conflict with the Chinese Communist government's professed “peaceful rising.”

Wen Jiabao also said that an important reason for the enormous accomplishments of China's openness and reform was “the fact that we have always upheld unity of the Party and safeguarded social and political stability.” He even declared that this “stability” and “unity” needed to continue for another “20 or 50 years.” In other words, one-party dictatorship and political persecution need to continue for a long time.

Put in this way, it can be said that the Chinese Communist government's talk of “peaceful rising” is in fact peaceful toward foreigners, but there is nothing peaceful in its treatment of Chinese people. The reason is very simple: the Chinese Communist government never for a moment forgets that it is a one-party dictatorship engaged in unlawful and violent warfare against its own citizens. A one-party dictatorship is never vegetarian; it devours its own people and sucks out their lifeblood, and without its daily ration it would quickly perish.

The question is whether a regime that consolidates and maintains its power by butchering its own peaceful protestors can genuinely rise in a way that contributes to world peace. Is it possible for a regime that relies for its survival on constantly impeding, threatening and sacrificing a portion of its own people to raise its stature in the world without impeding, threatening and sacrificing any foreigners? Phrasing the question another way, given that the Chinese government resorts to violence against its own people, might it not also resort to violence against the rest of the world once it becomes sufficiently powerful? There is no way to answer these questions without causing deep concern.

For that reason, the only way to prevent the dangerous scenarios described above is to immediately intensify and expedite democratic reform in China. To be sure, the struggle for democratization currently faces many obstacles and considerable peril; but we need to recognize that if we put off the struggle, the dangers and obstacles will become even greater.

Translated by Paul Frank and Stacy Mosher

Translator's notes

1. This is probably Jiang Zemin's 68-page report to the opening of the 16th Party Congress. See Erik Eckholm, “China's Leader Urges Party to Reform Economy, Not Politics,” *New York Times*, November 9, 2002.
2. *Heping jueqi*, alternatively translated as “peaceful rising” and “peaceful ascendancy.”
3. Wen Jiabao made his comments during a press conference at the Great Hall of the People on March 14, 2004. A full transcript of the press conference, and an English translation can be accessed at: <http://www.beaktrans.com/Html/200449114443-1.Html>
4. In a letter dated February 24, 2004 military surgeon Dr. Jiang Yanyong called on the government to admit that it made mistakes during the 1989 crackdown. See, “SARS Hero's Call for Reassessment of June 4th” elsewhere in this issue.