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That Holy Word, "Revolution"

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In Communist China, there is no word more sacred or richer in righteous indignation and moral force than "revolution." In the name of revolution, one party despotism and individual autocracy have been carried out. Again and again, in the name of "revolution, inhumane political movements have been launched. In the name of revolution, individuals have been stripped of all the rights that they ought to enjoy. In the name of revolution, the economy has been destroyed and historic culture has been extinguished. The name of revolution has even been used in the service of hygiene—in the elimination of the "four pests," which sacrificed flies and sparrows at the altar of revolution. Contemporary Chinese are too enthusiastic about revolution, too worshipful of revolution. Each and every one of us is both victim and carrier of that word, revolution: "The Paris Commune Revolution"; "The October Revolution"; "The Revolution of 1911"; "The Old Democratic Revolution"; "The New Democratic Revolution"; "The Socialist Revolution"; "The Communist Revolution"; "Continual Revolution Under the Dictatorship of the Proletariat"; "The Great Cultural Revolution"; "Reform is a profound revolution." Contemporary Chinese call every social change either a "revolution" or a "counterrevolution." (For example, the 1989 protest movement was referred to by the students as "The Great Revolution For Democracy and Against Dictatorship"; the government, however, referred to it as a "counterrevolutionary rebellion.") Whether to express gratitude or resentment, everyone borrows the name of revolution to speak with the force of justice. It has even reached the point where people will say: "the family revolution," "the marriage revolution," "revolution erupting in the depth of one's soul," as well as "revolutionary heroism," "revolutionary romanticism," "revolutionary realism," "revolutionary writing," "revolutionary couple," "revolutionary descendants," "revolutionary successor." Revolutionary righteousness of itself requires no

precondition; on the contrary, revolution is a precondition for the righteousness of any other thing. Whoever the person or whatever the thing, all that is necessary is to give it the name "revolution" and it becomes progressive and full of righteous sentiment. No one suspects or even asks: What in fact is revolution? There is no use in asking and no need to ask. All that we do and all that we think is for the sake of "carrying forth revolution to the very end!"

Regardless of whether we consider its etymological root and modern meaning or the sociological, cultural, and mass-psychological relevance of its practical, concrete application, *geming* (revolution) cannot be translated, as a complete equivalent, into the English "revolution." In English, "revolution" has three levels of meaning: (1) revolve; (2) a large, fundamental social change; and (3) the use of violence to effect a transfer of political rights.¹ It is noteworthy that, in English, the word "revolution" does not carry much of its Chinese counterpart's connotation of sacred righteousness. In Chinese, however, "revolution" in its original ancient sense is the mandate of heaven that a sovereign borrowed or accepted in order to usher in a new dynasty; the word carries a sense of the sacredness and justification associated with carrying out the will of heaven. In the modern era, whether in Sun Yatsen's "the revolution has yet to be completed" or in Mao Zedong's "carry the revolution through to the end," the term "revolution" connotes a supreme sense of the sacred and an exaggerated righteousness. Particularly since the Communist Party took power, "revolution" has become a pure, holy word. For example, "the proletarian revolution was the greatest, most profound, most just socialist revolution in human history." "Revolution" possesses an inherent justice, as sacrosanct as "natural rights" in recent Western history. When we examine the composition of the word, we find that *geming* is a verb-object combination. "Ge" is the verb, meaning "change, eliminate, revoke, strip." As for "ming," it means "heavenly mandate, law, life." Together, "ge-ming" has the sense of "social transformation" or "taking a man's life." For example, "gezhi" implies "revoking an occupational duty" or "stripping away rights." Thus, the word "revolution" in Chinese, even when one merely examines the component characters, possesses a not-to-be-doubted quality of righteousness and a not-to-be-blasphemed sacredness. It is one of the most frequently used words in the Communist Party lexicon.

The term "revolution," considered from its sociological, cultural, and mass-

psychological angles, has in post-1949 China implied justice, correctness, kindness, virtue, good fortune, and holiness. It also has implied supreme authority; to lay claim to it is to make a bid for what Tony Saich refers to ([Chapter 12](#)) as "symbolic capital." It is not possible to express suspicion or opposition to "revolution." "Revolution" implies devotion, sacrifice, daring, fearlessness, idealism, and romantic feelings. It implies longevity and flourishing vitality. All you have to do is say "for the revolution. ..It always indicates an iron will, a willingness to "die nine deaths without regret." "Revolution" implies the justice and reasonableness of "profound hatred from great bitterness," violent bloodshed, and cruel struggle. Hatred and poverty are driven by "revolution." If there is to be revolution, there must be hatred. Whoever is the poorest is also the most revolutionary. All members of the working class are the most revolutionary. That is why Mao Zedong called the revolution that he led "a movement of ruffians." "Revolution" implies unyielding, uncompromising, intolerant, uncooperative qualities—a radical justice that shows no forgiveness; the more radical, the more extreme; the more absolute, the more revolutionary. It is not possible for one's faith to be shaken in any way. "Revolution" implies that to rebel is just; that individual actions pale in the sight of heaven compared to actions done in the name of revolution. No matter how cruel the behavior, how blind and unconsidered the action, how absurd the movement—if it can be termed "revolutionary," it becomes reasonable and can be carried out unscrupulously.

In the education system of the Communist Party, an obsession with "revolution" caused us to lose our humanity and rationality, to lose our social conscience and tolerance, to lose the most basic standards of right and wrong, and even to lose the distinction between good and evil. We have been driven mad by "revolution." We have been suffocated by "revolution." We have been spoiled by "revolution" so that we have lost any capacity for feeling awe, fear, or humility. The 1989 protest movement once again showed that "revolution" prevailed. The venom of "revolution" is too deep within us, with the result that we continually become unconscious sacrificial items for the cause of revolutionary justice. We still are infatuated with "revolution."

Revolutions Are the Festivals of the Oppressed and the

Exploited

Although we have experienced the unprecedented cruelty of the "Anti-Rightist Movement" and the "Great Cultural Revolution," we still are not truly aware of the horror and cruelty of "revolution." Although ten years of reform have attenuated the sacred quality of "revolution" and weakened the political culture built upon class struggle, we still worship "revolution" in our bones. We are still the "revolutionary successors." As soon as we meet with a large-scale political movement, our enthusiasm for "revolution" swells; as soon as the kindling of revolution is lit, it burns—the fire rapidly becoming flames that reach to heaven, consuming everything. It does not matter whether the movement is of the extreme Right or the extreme Left, autocratic or democratic, progressive or regressive; "revolution" supersedes all. From within any tendency, it is possible to excite our frenzied worship of "revolution." The 1989 protest movement was once again the "great revolution" of the army advancing toward democracy. In spite of its tragic, bloody end, the revolutionary enthusiasm that had lain dormant for nearly ten years once again ruled us; finally, it again revealed its vigor and dynamism. It was an earthshaking opportunity. Everyone wanted to take advantage of this opportunity to perform a great deed, a great achievement to impress the generations that would follow.

The events in May 1989 in Tiananmen Square were a reminder of that famous statement of Lenin's: "Revolutions are the festivals of the oppressed and the exploited."² The crowds that came to Tiananmen Square to demonstrate and parade at first arrived on foot; later they came in squadrons of bicycles, three-wheeled vehicles, and finally motorcycles and cars. The roar of the motors, the unfurled flags, the banners raised in great numbers, the slogans chanted one after another, the ubiquitous "V" (for "victory") signs, and the wide smiles on the faces of the people—all of these elements created a celebratory atmosphere as though it was a show. The gigantic banner, several dozen meters long, that hung from the Revolutionary History Museum, displayed but one word: "Awake." The fasting students kept on collapsing; doctors in white uniforms shuttled back and forth, and the sirens of the ambulances wailed. The tragic sense of a righteous advance to death heightened the already intense, showlike atmosphere of the Square. The celebratory events on the Square, in which the university students were the

principal actors, attracted farmers, workers, soldiers, cadres, merchants, entrepreneurs, intellectuals, and even a silver-haired old professor making his way with a walking stick past the ranks of people expressing their support for the students. An old retired woman, her face all wrinkled, rode on a three-wheeled vehicle pulled by her son. She, too, made the "V"-for-victory sign. High-school and elementary students carried banners supporting their elder brothers and sisters and raised their fists in show of support. Innocent kindergarteners, waving colored triangular flags, led by the teachers they called "aunties," joined the celebration. There were also robed, shaven-headed monks, chanting their prayers amidst the sounds of their "wooden fish." All of these diverse elements joining together gave people the mistaken impression that this was a revolution that was about to succeed. All of this deepened the atmosphere of celebration. It was like the joyous Square on every National Day or May Day—even more like a square where exuberant crowds throng in the midst of "revolution." The 1989 protest movement did really make every participant dance with joy in high-spirited celebration. Beginning on October 1, 1949, when Mao Zedong led the state-founding ceremony, every year similar events have taken place at Tiananmen Square. Forty years ago, Mao Zedong, brimming with confidence, announced the success of the revolution; forty years later, young university student leaders and prominent intellectuals, too, full of confidence, awaited the success of the "newest" revolution.

We thought that Deng Xiaoping's dictatorship could really come to an end in the midst of this earthshaking revolution; a government of one-party despotism really could fall among that "forest" of arms. How many heroes of the moment set their hearts on the roles they wanted to play after they attained fame? The celebratory, revolutionary atmosphere made it impossible for us to face China's political reality and the stability of Communist Party rule. It was not simply that the Communist Party held in its grip all of the national government machinery as well as an army of several million men; it was also the case that Deng Xiaoping had, through ten years of reform and liberalization, won popular support. We mistook the popular dissatisfaction over some problems associated with reform for a complete loss of hope in the Deng Xiaoping regime. We were of the opinion that—with the support of the masses—Zhao Ziyang would replace Deng Xiaoping. However, we were unable to reasonably assess the successes and

failures of ten years of reform and liberalization. We prominent intellectuals, based on our own interests (the depreciation of knowledge in the rising tide of commodities; the relative decline in living standards of intellectuals, and so forth), took popular rejection of the regime's "eliminate corruption" and "antiliberalization" campaigns and exaggerated its significance so that it seemed a rejection of all of Deng Xiaoping's administrative policies. In reality, although people were dissatisfied with some problems related to reform and although the "eliminate corruption" and "antiliberalization" campaigns somewhat lessened the credibility of Deng Xiaoping, the people nevertheless recognized that in the Deng Xiaoping era (in contrast to the Mao Zedong era of class struggle) every effort was being made to develop the economy and raise the standard of living. This resulted in widespread and deep popular support and a solid, practical legitimacy. The weakening of this popular base and practical legitimacy due to the "eliminate corruption" and "antiliberalization" campaigns was mainly limited to intellectuals. The masses demanded only that there be money to earn and that their standard of living be gradually raised. With these demands being met, the masses were unwilling either to completely abandon the current administration or to thoroughly reject the governing policies of Deng Xiaoping. Objectively speaking, compared to the Mao Zedong era, the changes in Deng Xiaoping's China—the progress of the ruling Party itself and the awakening of the consciousness of the masses—have amazed the world. The enormous changes and progress that ten years of Deng Xiaoping rule have brought to China are greater than those that ten Mao Zedongs could have produced. We cannot, just because of Deng Xiaoping's dictatorship, completely deny the achievements of reform. The despotism of the Party, gunning down people, dictatorship—all of these are evils that must be rectified, but when we face the realities of China, we recognize that this rectification must be gradual, peaceful, and long term. We must not only rely on political pressure from the people but also rely even more on the self-reform of the Communist Party. If the popular political pressure exceeds the actual capacity of those in power to bear this pressure, the reaction that it will cause will not speed up the Communist Party's self-reform and democratization process. To the contrary, it will interrupt or delay this process. The lesson from the blood of June 4 has made this clear already. Moreover, after June 4, Deng Xiaoping rapidly restored social order. The Communist Party again gained solid

control of the situation. This shows that Deng Xiaoping's authority does not rely only on violent oppression and bloody terror. It also depends on the accumulated popular support of ten years of reform. The blood of June 4 by no means completely undid this popular support. Deng Xiaoping need only continue to persist in the reforms and develop the economy. If the Communist Party persists in improving itself, Deng Xiaoping's rule will not topple overnight. The pre-June 4 reality, the fact of the June Fourth Massacre, and the fact of the steadfast implementation of post-June 4 reforms all manifest a truth that we participants in the June Fourth movement are emotionally unwilling to accept but that intellectually we must accept: In today's China, the least costly way to democratization and modernization is self-reform of the Communist Party. Political pressure from civil society can only moderately promote this kind of self-reform. A little imprudence could even lead to a greater tragedy than that of June Fourth.

Now that we have seen the Chinese political reality for what it is, let us return to the 1989 protest movement. We have come to see how, tempted by revolutionary righteousness, we abandoned our rationality. We have no way of objectively knowing how many of the nearly one million who gathered in Tiananmen Square were completely dissatisfied with the reforms. How many knew that these forty years of tragedy in China were because of the wild excesses of despotism? How many participated guided by a clear and certain concept of democracy? The illusion created by the dynamism of the moment caused us to ignore the horrible consequences that would result from the continual escalation of the movement and caused our confidence in democratic righteousness to grow far from political reality into a wild presumption that was on the verge of dominating China.

The June Fourth Movement found itself in an environment that, created by ten years of reform, was the most liberal since 1949, and the movement was both inspired by the global democratization trend and thought itself protected by the human rights demands of the Western democratic nations; it opposed despotism and called for democracy in an excessively righteous way. The tragedy lay in the fact that we were only aware of the pursuit of democratic righteousness, aware of the fact that democratization was a global trend and was the future direction of China, aware of the popular opinion expressed by the tumultuous crowds in the

Square, aware that our encirclement by countless foreign journalists demonstrated the entire globe's support for us; we were once again overwhelmed by the righteousness of our romantic idealism. We were too righteous, too bold, and too assured. We were completely intoxicated. Therefore, we completely overlooked the fact that Chinese reality lacks the conditions for putting in place overnight a democratic society. We were not aware that, although political democratization is a prerequisite to China's modernization, it is by no means the only prerequisite. Without political democratization, the current reforms in China cannot be carried forward and deepened. But if the focus is skewed too much toward only political democratization, it is not possible to effect a change in direction toward reform and modernization. In the China of today, democratization is not a miraculous prescription, for China lacks the appropriate conditions. Not only is it the case that the Communist Party, which has a firm grasp on political power, is unable to accept a political system that involves multiparty rule (or pluralism, for that matter); it is also the case that the masses still do not understand democratic rights well enough and are incapable of using legal measures to protect themselves in their struggle for individual rights. What is even more telling as to the failure of the movement is that we university students and intellectuals, who have been called "soldiers of democracy," and "stars of democracy" only understand democracy on paper and in theory and do not have a "working" knowledge of real, operating democracy. We do not understand how to establish and implement democracy as a political system or as a comprehensive set of legal procedures. Professor Fang Lizhi, who has been called China's Sakharov, abandoned a great opportunity to use legal measures to protect his own basic human rights even before the 1989 protest movement. The incident—in which he was prevented from attending a banquet to which he had been invited by U.S. President Bush—passed almost completely unnoticed. The famous Liu Binyan, who has been called China's conscience, holds different political views from those of the movement. Prior to the 1989 protest movement, he still persisted in upholding Marxism and socialism and continued to champion the concept of "A Second Kind of Loyalty."³ Therefore, the chance that there would arise— from this mixture of intellectuals who still needed to learn the ABC's of democracy—the force of popular opposition was extremely slight. The 1989 protest movement produced by these combined factors could only be the

symbolic representation of a formalized consciousness. The democracy that we sought during the movement was too empty, too emotional, and did not go beyond the exciting, romantic stage of hollow slogans and idealism of our newly formed consciousness. Most of the resources and methods we made use of to mobilize the masses were ones that the Communist Party itself had used many times before. We were pursuing a large-scale, yet hollow, sensational effect and were unwilling to make point-by-point, concrete requests as well as unprepared to actually implement the vision. This is to say that we still did not understand that democratization is not only an ideal, not only a grand spectacle; it is also the actual, concrete, detailed, even tedious process of setting up and applying democratic procedures. With respect to the specific task of actually creating a functioning democratically governed society, we are just like the Communist Party: We both must begin from scratch.

The revolutionary celebration, which shook the world and which was supported by our great yet empty democratic righteousness, led us down the wrong path. To us, the prominent intellectuals on whose lips is always found democracy, it was discovered to be a more complex undertaking than we had anticipated.

Altar of Righteousness—Sacrifice

The pursuit of spectacular, astonishing effects necessarily leads to a radical stirring of the emotions. The climax of radical emotional excitement is the collective giving up of lives to heroic undertakings. For the race, for democracy, for freedom, we were willing to march to the altar of righteousness— and consequently of sacrifice. In May 1989, the students organized a period of collective fasting involving more than one thousand persons. The movement was not led by the ideals of any one person but by an emotional radicalism. Whoever was radical became the object of everyone's attention. Every where—in the pronouncements of the fasting students and in the pronouncements of each group supporting the fast, in the "forest" of banners and in the slogans, on the T-shirts of the students wearing the white cloth headbands of the fast—one could see

these words: "We are making history with our lives"; "We are using our fresh blood to launch a new era for the Chinese people"; "I will have no regrets with respect to future generations"; "Blood spattered on the gate of the nation, tears sprinkled on the fertile earth"; "Without freedom, I prefer to die." At the students' command headquarters in the Square, they again and again broadcast the oath: "Heads may be chopped off, blood may flow, but democratic liberty may not be lost." The sad strains of the official song of the Chinese Communist Party, the "Internationale"; the increasingly heavy atmosphere of martyrdom; and the spirit of sacrifice blended together perfectly. Writing letters in their own blood and writing wills, the students evaluated their own commitment to the cause by means of fabricated deaths. This image of giving one's life for righteousness infected everyone on the Square. The mournful wailing of the ambulances cut through the sky, indicating that at any moment a death might occur. By way of the "lifeline" that was maintained by members of the public order squads (their hands linked), the ambulance hurried, red lights flashing, never stopping for a moment. The faces of those near death on the stretchers, doctors in white overcoats, nurses shouting and gesticulating for the crowd to "clear the way"—all demonstrated the tragedy of the collective sacrifice of lives. The pathos of the twelve students from the Central Drama College who abstained from water exceeded that of even the fasters, and the twelve, as a matter of course, became idols on the Square. Through every means of propaganda, and by the watching crowds, they were raised high and placed on the altar of righteous sacrifice to highlight this scene of martyrdom. This most majestic and most moving image of China at the end of the twentieth century satisfied the people's long-quiescent martyrdom complex. If those several students who demanded self-immolation had not been persuaded against such an act, the fires of martyrdom would really have been lighted on the Square, and the ancient Confucian morality of "killing oneself to attain virtue" would have had its contemporary expression.

This fanaticism of giving lives and this spirit of sacrifice came from the lofty sense of mission that society bestowed on the students. Young scholars, supported by what they perceived to be the entire society, felt themselves to be incarnations of righteousness. Moreover, people of every level of society revered them as incarnations of righteousness. As this sense of righteousness became more and more radicalized, no one, except for the heartless government, rationally asked:

what will be the result of this radicalism? It was as if the whole society had, by means of their actions, affirmed that the young students should bear upon their collective shoulders the enormous, heaven-sent responsibility of saving China from the grip of despotism. The exaggerated sense of mission and the grandiose sense of history-in-the-making caused the students to lose their ability to control themselves and to know themselves. They did not know that their young shoulders were simply incapable of bearing such a heavy burden. Drawn by the increasingly strong attraction of righteousness, the students, putting their lives on the line, engaged in a continually escalating and futile resistance against the government. It was as though only by giving up one's life could one move the government, only by sacrificing could one awaken the masses, and only by dying could one accomplish righteousness or become qualified to represent righteousness. No wonder that Chai Ling, who was commander in chief of the Square and who successfully fled overseas, replied in a matter-of-fact manner to some people who criticized the students for being overly passionate and brave at the expense of wisdom and reason: "On the Square at the time, courage was simply the standard." That is, do not consider reality; abandon reason, we need only be brave, need only be willing to devote and sacrifice ourselves; we are the heroes of the 1989 protest movement. What is regrettable is that, after the 1989 protest movement was repressed with bayonets and tanks, the people scanned the list of the leading persons in June Fourth and failed to find a single contemporary Tan Sitong. Those who were regarded as heroes during the climactic moments of the movement as well as those leading persons who regarded themselves as heroes were, following June Fourth, one after another tried in the court of morality and justice. The people cannot bear the fact that the entire nation awaited a martyr and yet not a single one was produced. Our passion was wasted. Our blood was shed in vain.

In this pursuit of sacrificing lives and in the mass-psychology of awaiting a martyr, one can see the enormous success of Communist Party socialization. Seeing the heroic bearing of those walking in the tracks of martyrs, people could not help thinking of those Communist Party members who, for the birth of the new China, remained underground for long periods. The defenses written in jail by Wang Juntao and Chen Ziming both mention that the awe-inspiring acts in the cause of justice that the previous generation of the Communist Party carried

out before the executioner's knife might be called models for this generation. Beginning from the time we enter elementary school, we hear the stories of Liu Hulan and Dong Cunrui;⁴ we know Mao Zedong's statement: "Born great, died glorious." The team song of the avantgarde youth is titled "Always Preparing." Preparing for what? Preparing to give one's life for the Communist Party. Altogether, too much teaching that warm blood be willingly spilled for the revolution has caused us to believe that one need only be willing to give one's life and bravely sacrifice oneself and then justice can be accomplished (and it is this justice that can ensure immortality). We simply have not considered that all that this fresh blood and death have established is a barbarian, despotic government. Mao Zedong, who promoted the spirit of sacrifice and who made everyone "first, not to fear hardship, second not to fear death," was none other than a murderous despot. We have not become aware that this righteousness—formed precisely from rashly giving one's life and fearlessly sacrificing oneself—has caused us to believe that to carry out a revolution, all that is needed is courage and not wisdom; all that is needed is passion and not reason; radicality and not compromise; a majestic spectacle and not attention to the mundane facts. Chai Ling's remark that "courage is the standard" can be understood as meaning that bravery is righteousness or, more exactly, that it is the kind of self-righteousness that causes us to believe that we can carry forth democracy without understanding the attendant responsibilities of democracy; that we can demand freedom without understanding the responsibilities of freedom. In other words, it causes us to understand democracy as the passion for giving one's life and the bravery of sacrifice; to understand it as a lot of soaring passion, a grand spectacle of large crowds, a profusion of slogans. We simply were not wont to know that democracy is the design, implementation, and operation of a rational system. Democracy has its cold side. Democracy is not at all romantic like the ideal we extol; democracy is mundane, even mediocre. Perhaps only by having learned the lesson of blood can we be aware that courage is not righteousness and resistance is not democracy.

The Righteousness of Doing as One Pleases

For forty years, we have not had any democratic political experience; our eyes and ears have been full of nothing but the cruel struggles and devious plots of despotic government. As soon as we began our revolution, we became extremely conceited—just as if we had reverted to the time of the Cultural Revolution and felt ourselves to be the most revolutionary. As soon as we joined into the 1989 protest movement, we considered ourselves to be the most democratic. After all, had we not fasted for democracy and devoted ourselves to it and made sacrifices for it? This made us even more certain that our conduct was of the highest righteousness. Our voice became the only truth. We felt as though we possessed absolute power. Truth became an absolute that would tolerate no questioning; righteousness became doing as one pleases; democracy became privilege; the Square became a miraculous place in which truth was judged, commitment was tested, sentiment was tempered, justice was extended, and rights were exercised. Whoever did not come to the Square or criticized the Square was an antidemocratic, unjust coward. The movement transformed the Square into a touchstone by which everyone was judged. "I spent some time at the Square" and "I've been to the Square" became passwords of a democratic consciousness and of a social conscience.

"There's been a revolution; now there's democracy." So now we can do as we please. Student management replaced the social order of a political party. The public order squads became traffic police. The student identification card became an all-purpose card—with it, we could ride without paying any fare, eat a meal without paying, intercept a vehicle as we pleased, frisk or interrogate any suspicious pedestrian, arbitrarily squander and waste the money that citizens donated, disregard hygiene, spit anywhere, litter at will, defecate or urinate anywhere, even smear feces on the windows of public buses and ignore legal procedures. With only the seal of the Square headquarters, we could declare ourselves married—this was called a "democratic wedding on the Square." We could arbitrarily destroy public property, release the air from the tires of public buses, and self-assuredly declare that this was to smash the government's plots. The Democratic Square was the Square of doing as one pleased, it was a Square from which the odor of feces and urine rose and spread; it was the Square where garbage was piled sky high. "There's been a revolution; there's now democracy." So now we cannot compromise or cooperate but can form factions as we please,

create organizations, anoint ourselves kings, dub our groupings as the Supreme Autonomous Federation, the Fasting Group, the Dialogue Group, the Foreign Supreme Federation, the Federation of Autonomous Unions, the Federated Association of Intellectuals, the Journalists' Alliance, the Dare-to-Die Squad, the Flying Tigers Squad, the West Route Army, the Children's Army, and so on. No one gave into anyone else, and no one could manage anyone else. The ancient saying "Everyone can become Yao Shun" became "Everyone can become a politician." Everyone had a different political philosophy. The Square, which on the surface seemed to be where the multitudes were united as one, was in fact the scene of many divisions, where everyone regarded themselves as separate, sovereign governments. Even if an agreement was reached, it could be abrogated at will. Even if one raised his hand and cast a vote to approve a policy decision, he could personally reject it just as soon as he left the meeting site and then, in the name of righteousness, carry out the decision after all. Between schools and between organizations, there were impassable walls. This frame of mind—in which one thinks oneself the wisest in the world—made everyone in the movement extremely conceited. A right-of-way permit became a mark of privilege. Those who had the right to distribute right-of-way permits seemed to have the right to decide who could join the revolution and who was qualified to participate in democracy. Our movement mobilized so many people and excited passions to such heights, yet we could not make reasonable policy decisions; we found ourselves in a policymaking limbo. If it had not been for the fact that the government repeatedly made incorrect policy decisions, which provided us with points to rally around, we might really have become a directionless, blind crowd.

"There's been a revolution; now there's democracy." So now we could fill our hearts with hatred, holding a bloody shirt and denouncing the wicked Communist Party; gnashing our teeth and berating them; mocking the character of others; engaging in unscrupulous personal attacks. We could berate so-and-so as an idiot, so-and-so as a dwarf, so-and-so as a fool. We could announce the execution of so-and-so, that so-and-so was to be boiled in oil, so and-so was to be buried alive, so-and-so was to be made to commit suicide, so-and-so was to be made to return home to his family; we could speak even more nastily of those who did not belong to our race. Our attitude was rude and unreasonable, even to the point that we came to blows; we could borrow the name of righteousness to

give expression to our personal gripes; we could choose not to accept any mediating force; regardless of the place or the person, we could adopt a hard-line attitude of noncompromise, intolerance, and noncooperation—blindly radical, blindly antagonistic—with the result that the protest movement escalated from concrete demands for redress to an antagonism that sought to bring down the government and throw out Deng Xiaoping. At the same time that we forced ourselves into a situation from which there was no backing out, we forced the government, whose position was at first one of dialogue and compromise, into the predicament of suppressing the peaceful movement with military force. In addition to the government, which has responsibility for the crime of opening fire and killing people, was it not also we, the "warriors of democracy" who were so sure of our righteousness, who had moral responsibility for the making of the final bloody tragedy? Hatred, radicalism, intolerance—these are precisely the revolutionary qualities that Mao Zedong had boldly called for; these were precisely where the essence of the political culture of class struggle is located. Revolution must be unwaveringly carried out to the end. Whoever argues for eliminating hatred or reaching agreements by means of compromise and tolerance is a coward, a traitor, or an academic bandit. The result is that our oath to die defending Tiananmen—our resolve to live or die with the Square— became the final negotiation, compromise, and peaceful retreat when the threat of death actually arrived.

"There's been a revolution; now there's democracy." Now we could, with our eyes open, speak lies; in broad daylight, manufacture rumors; face those concerned and claim that our lying was justified; irresponsibly announce: "Deng Xiaoping has died"; "Li Peng has fled"; "Yang Shangkun was injured"; "Zhao Ziyang has returned"; "Wan Li organized a new government in Canada"; "Twelve cadres of the State Council have declared their departure from the current government"; "Guangzhou and the minority autonomous regions have declared independence"; "The Twenty-seventh and Thirty-eighth Armies have started fighting"; and so on. Tiananmen Square, the symbol of the democratic movement, became a place where lies and rumors were gathered and dispersed. Lies that grew larger the more they were told and rumors whose sources grew increasingly uncertain suddenly became a driving force of the movement. They made radicalism seem more reasonable, raised people's unrealistic hopes of victory, and

made it impossible for us to know what, in fact, was happening in China. After June 4, the "warriors for democracy" who fled overseas wantonly twisted the facts so as to exaggerate the cruelty and wickedness of the Communist Party and form the heroic image of themselves as having climbed out of a bloodbath; they stained the bloody surface of Tiananmen Square and misled international opinion. The ebb and flow of time has gradually returned the original scene to history, and after people are able to rationally understand the 1989 protest movement, the evil consequences and tragedy created by the lies and rumors will dissipate.

"There's been a revolution; now there's democracy." We could choose to value only our own freedom of speech, while stripping this freedom of speech from others. We were like Mao Zedong used to be, not permitting any different opinions to exist. As for our own actions, we could only envision support for them on the part of others; our actions could not be criticized. We were like the Communist Party police, forcing journalists not to take pictures that were not to our advantage or that might damage our image. When the journalists shouted out "freedom of the press" and still took pictures, we savagely grabbed the cameras from the journalists' hands, opened them, and exposed the film to light. We sometimes even smashed the journalists' photographic equipment to pieces. We only considered our own rights and safety. Any behavior that threatened our safety and rights, regardless of whether it was justified or legal, was determinedly put to an end by us. In order to keep the government from using an act of vandalism as an excuse for crushing our movements, we escorted the men who defiled Mao Zedong's portrait to the public security bureau, with the result that they were sentenced by the Communist Party to imprisonment for 20 years, 18 years, and 15 years. Were they not exercising their own rights? Should they really remain in prison?

What is even more tragic is that the self-righteousness of the 1989 protest movement was a kind of threat to everyone. People with different opinions fell silent under the pressure of this self-righteousness. Those who did not dare to speak differently and did not want to participate in the movement took to the streets because they feared being called a coward or a scab. The fast transformed the university students into revolutionary saints who could not be criticized. It might be said that, to a certain degree, the students' fast not only presented the

government with a difficult issue; it presented society with a difficult issue. When people saw young students paying the price of their lives to oppose the government, who could say the word "no"? Whoever could have said "no," whoever's heart was not moved by such a commitment, did not have a conscience. Whoever doubted the absolute sincerity of the students was an accomplice of the despotic government. The fast caused most people to temporarily forsake their reason and caused the very small minority who retained their reason to fall silent. The rational few even suspected that their own calmness might show a lack of basic sympathy.

The democracy that was extolled during the 1989 protest movement possessed only the smallest amount of realistic, rational righteousness. During the movement, we madly sought blind, abstract righteousness and abandoned actual, rational righteousness.

Would That June Fourth Were the Last of Blind "Righteousness"

The failure of the 1989 protest movement lay not only in the shedding of blood, the consequent deaths, and the violent suppression of a large-scale, spontaneous mass movement; the failure lay also in the fierce antagonisms that grew out of the continual escalation of the movement. This escalation led to the delay of the reform process and weakened the people's trust in Deng Xiaoping's rule. It also interrupted the process by which the ruling Party was gradually democratizing and reforming itself, thereby causing China to suffer a total reversal of the Party's self-reform. The relaxed atmosphere of early 1989 was gone, replaced by an atmosphere of antagonism, tension, and terror. After June 4, 1989, the reorganization of political rule caused the economy to stagnate. The return to an emphasis on the concept of class struggle made political reform a highly sensitive issue. The murderous air of the Mao Zedong era once again hovered over the vast land of China. The hatred buried in the hearts of the masses as a result of this bloody event will erupt as soon as the opportunity arises. Although Deng Xiaoping still upholds the reform line and his Southern Tour gave rise to an

upsurge in economic development, the tight political control in the wake of the events of June 4 has resulted in abnormal development of the Chinese modernization process, and Zhao Ziyang's fall from power has ensured that the power struggle after Deng Xiaoping's death will be most dangerous. Because of the fall from power of Zhao Ziyang—a man with a strong conscience—crisis has emerged around what should have been a smooth and stable transfer of power. A kind of crazed "end of the century" psychology has driven people to think of nothing but getting the most that they can (out of the remaining reform) before calamity strikes. The masses are acutely aware that in Deng Xiaoping's health lies the last chance. If it is missed, they will become meaningless sacrificial pawns in the chaotic world that will follow Deng Xiaoping's death. This "end of the century" phobia cannot be eliminated simply through economic development. At the same time, dispelling the political fears of the ruling Party itself and assuaging the hatred of the masses cannot be accomplished through social stability or a prosperous economy or by raising the standard of living. The political fears of the ruling Party and the "end of the century" phobia of the masses have made it very unlikely that China can move smoothly and steadily toward a modernized, democratic society. Unless the ruling Party and all the people end their antagonism right now and attain social cooperation,⁵ it will be impossible to dispel the hatreds and fears on both sides. As the date of Deng Xiaoping's death approaches, those hatreds and fears will become more and more intense, leading to social upheaval sooner rather than later.

Therefore, ending the hostility, dispelling fears, attaining social cooperation, and smoothly and steadily leading China to a modern, democratic society cannot simply depend on the ruling Party resolutely carrying out self reform and revising its public image; realizing these goals also depends on the cooperation of opposition groups among the people. With this cooperation, self-reform can be gradually accomplished. The current stability in China is perhaps our last chance. The ruling Party must recognize that (1) its own political democratization is not only the direction favored by popular conscience but also by the general trend of world events and that (2) rather than be forced by external factors, it is best to consciously make the changes oneself. The only one who can save the Communist Party is the Communist Party itself. If it gradually, step by step, reforms itself and moves toward democratization, the Communist Party will

survive. But if it continues to uphold one-party despotism, the Communist Party will perish. At the same time, opposition groups among the people should not drive the Communist Party from its ruling position; instead, while the Communist Party is carrying out self-reform, these groups should encourage changes under Party rule. For the ruling Party and for the masses, this would be China's wisest choice during a period of rapid transformation.

During this process, the ruling Party should seriously consider playing a political card—the June Fourth card. No one can avoid a re-evaluation of the June Fourth Massacre. The June Fourth card must be played. The critical question is—how is it to be played? And when should it be played? As a sudden redress following the death of Deng Xiaoping? Or by the ruling Party, beginning now, gradually relieving the accumulated dissatisfactions and hatreds of June Fourth? Should the investigation into criminal responsibility for the bloodshed be pursued urgently? Or should the investigation be put off? I think that the wise choice would be the latter. There is no need to make social commentaries, no need to hold a big meeting, and no need to make public proclamations. All that needs to be done is to privately compensate the kin of the June Fourth victims; release all June Fourth political prisoners; restore to their former positions those who, because of June Fourth, were unfairly treated; gradually remove and demote those who rose to power on the blood of June Fourth; and allow those who fled overseas because of June Fourth to safely return. All of this is, I believe, a necessary part of the changing of the ruling Party's image, part of its democratization, part of what will win the hearts of the people. If the ruling Party does not begin now, if after Deng Xiaoping's death some politician relies on a sudden redress of June Fourth wrongs to gain power, it will likely be a catastrophe not only for this politician, but for China. The explosive consequences of a sudden redress are beyond anyone's control. The flood of hatred will drown all who want to have a piece of the June Fourth pie. In the China of the future, those people who, as it were, come to the battlefield with the flash of cold steel might, for the sake of righting the wrongs of the June Fourth bloodshed, cause an even larger scale, even crueler bloodshed. It might even be a bloodbath.

In today's China, five years after the June Fourth bloodshed (and after nearly three continuous years of June fourth-inspired retrenchment throughout China),

in a China filled with the fear of the end of the century—much remains to be reconciled. I don't know if we university students and intellectuals who played the role of revolutionary saints and democratic stars for two months can reasonably, calmly, justly, and realistically reevaluate what we did and thought in 1989; I don't know if we can face the Chinese reality of crises emerging on all sides and find within ourselves the courage and wisdom to pursue patiently a feasible plan for lasting reform beginning with the smallest details. If we can, then even if we have only the slightest strength, the blood of June Fourth will not have flowed in vain—it will still be thicker than water. If we can't, then the blood of June Fourth will at most be able to nurture those shameless bloodsuckers.

Would that June Fourth were China's last government by the people in which every person believes himself a politician.

Would that June Fourth were China's last grand spectacle of blind revolutionary self-righteousness.

Notes

1. Very insightful but quite differently structured accounts to Western understandings of the term "revolution," and the way these understandings have changed over time, are provided in Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), revised edition, pp. 270-274; Mona Ozouf, "Revolution," in François Furet and Mona Ozouf, eds., *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 806-817; and John Dunn, "Revolution," in Terrence Ball et al., eds., *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 333-351. *Ed.*
2. Stephan T. Possony, ed., *The Lenin Reader* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1966), p. 349, *Ed.*
3. See Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search, for Modern China* (New York: Norton, 1990), p. 726, for a concise description of Liu Binyan's notion of loyalty. Its main feature is a belief that supporters of the Party should be able to criticize specific acts of official misbehavior without being branded disloyal; such criticisms, the journalist claimed, actually served to strengthen rather than weaken the CCP. *Ed.*
4. Liu Hulan was a 14-year-old girl. The KMT executed her prior to 1949. She died in quite a heroic manner. Mao Zedong said of her, "A great life, a glorious death," thereby calling all of the nation's people to learn the spirit of revolution from her. Dong Cunrui was a young soldier in the Liberation

Army. During the War of Liberation, he used his body as a supporting frame for explosives in an attack on the KMT army positions. He destroyed himself as well as a KMT army pillbox. After 1949, the movie *Dong Cunrui* proclaimed his revolutionary heroism.

5. The one who called for social cooperation was my friend, Zhou Duo. In 1989, when we jointly drafted "The June Second Fasting Manifesto," he pointed out that one of the main points of the manifesto was a call for an end to hostilities and for total social cooperation.