

MESSAGE FROM TIANANMEN



Beijing, the capital of China, continued to crackle with political tension and activity through this past week. A core of student activists kept up their occupation of Tiananmen Square to press forward their demands against the government. Each day hundreds of thousands of students, workers, and others demonstrated in Tiananmen Square and the streets of the city. Groups of protesters formed around-the-clock human barricades to prevent convoys of troops from moving into Beijing. Meanwhile there was sharp infighting among the top reactionaries who rule China, and some official heads may roll. As we go to press there are reports that the government has regained the initiative for now and that the students have decided to end their two-week occupation of Tiananmen Square.



Government Moves and People's Response

The troops were first ordered to move against the demonstrators on the weekend of May 20-21 by Premier Li Peng after he announced martial law for parts of Beijing. For many protesters Li, along with the top revisionist Deng Xiaoping, was already a symbol of government policies they were opposed to. His order for martial law and mobilization of troops made him an even more hated target. People at Tiananmen Square shouted, "Deep fry Li," and, "As long as Li Peng retains his post, we will come every day! Until Li Peng commits suicide by hanging, we will not sleep!"

The government moves also sparked even bolder protest actions and firmed up the determination of many activists. As soon as news of the troop movements spread, thousands rushed to main roads into Beijing and stopped army trucks and personnel carriers from heading toward Tiananmen Square. Demonstrators organized themselves into shifts so they could surround the troops and keep watch on them all day and night. At one of the human barricades, a 39-year-old worker from the Capital Iron and Steel factory said, "We have towels for tear gas and maybe buckets of cement to make road blocks, but besides that, we come

just as we are—people." Several hundred city buses were taken over by protesters and used as roadblocks on main streets in Beijing. And when people heard that troops might come by train, thousands rushed out to the railroad station, ready to block any units that might come that way.

At the beginning of the week one student leader tried to convince others to leave Tiananmen Square, but he came in for wide criticism from the other students. By the end of the week there was a narrower majority when a proposal to leave the square in return for a government promise not to retaliate was voted down. The number of students staying at Tiananmen became smaller during the week, as many students scattered through the capital to conduct street-corner agitation, went to the outlying areas to help stop the troops, or returned to campuses to rest. Among the students who continued to stay at Tiananmen, about 1,000 reportedly formed themselves into a "suicide squad." One member, a 24-year-old student from Hunan Province, said, "We have sworn an oath to die rather than to be defeated, and we will do it."

Many of the students remaining in Tiananmen Square by the end of the week came from outside Beijing. Railway

workers have been giving students from the provinces free rides on the trains. The government issued a strongly worded notice to try to stop more protesters from coming in to the capital. It ordered local officials to stop students from leaving for Beijing and especially not let them get on trains without tickets.

Among workers, too, groups pledging to put their lives on the line for the movement were organized. One group of 300 called themselves the "desperados" and seemed to be made up mainly of single workers willing to go right up in the face of the troops and authorities. There were also the "kamikazes" who roamed around the capital all night looking for army convoys, carrying knives to slash the tires of army trucks.

Campus Life Turned Upside Down

At the universities final exams are coming up, but campus life has been in an uproar. Students boycotted classes, and most teachers went on sympathy strikes and were not preparing any exams. A 36-year-old economics teacher said, "Before the movement, we just taught students. Now, we spend all our time in meetings trying to figure out ways to help the students. We want some results, too."

One account described the scene at

Beijing University: "A loudspeaker almost continually broadcasts the latest rumors and protest plans. The campus triangle, which is covered with posters, has become a center for exchanging news. The floors of the long dormitory hallways are often used for writing banners. Dormitory rooms have been converted into conference centers." A graduate student who was supposed to turn in her thesis soon told a reporter, "Because the atmosphere outside is so stirring and exciting, I can't just sit around to work on my thesis. It sometimes feels so selfish."

There were similar scenes in many other campuses across China. At one university in the southern city of Guangdong, a teacher said that in the beginning the faculty did nothing. "Now, everyone talks about support for the students, and young teachers discuss the politics of the day even in class, in the open."

According to news reports, the Tiananmen revolt has sparked anti-government demonstrations in many other cities all across China. Marches of over 10,000 people have been common. In Shenzhen 100,000 people, one-fifth of the population in that city, took to the streets. Shenzhen, located next to Hongkong in the south, is one of the

Continued on page 14

MESSAGE FROM TIANANMEN

Continued from page 3

Chinese government's "special economic zones" where foreign companies get special privileges and can make big profits off Chinese labor. In Shanghai, China's largest city and a major industrial center, the authorities have been especially worried about unrest among workers. In some factories workers were warned they will be punished for taking time off for demonstrations and promised bonuses if they show up for work every day.

Influence of Mao and the Cultural Revolution

The media in the U.S. has tried to say that the recent upsurge in China is somehow the result of the influence of Western democracy and values on the Chinese people, who are described, in racist stereotyping, as "passive" by nature. They claim that what has happened in recent weeks is "unprecedented" in the forty years since China's liberation. As for things like the workers forming into groups to confront the troops and defend students, railway workers giving students free rides, campuses and factories being turned into headquarters of political organizing, the support given by

the people of Beijing to the students in Tiananmen Square, etc., the U.S. media is at a loss to explain how the supposedly "passive" Chinese people can be capable of such highly developed forms of organized rebellion against authority.

But mass political activity and organization by the Chinese are not "unprecedented"—and they definitely have nothing to do with Western bourgeois democracy. In many ways the legacy of Mao Tsetung and his revolutionary leadership, especially the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, is making itself felt in the upsurge against those who rule China today.

Although the revisionists stole state power from the proletariat and genuine communists after Mao's death in 1976 and brought back capitalism to China, there is a whole generation of Chinese people who knew what it was like to live under revolutionary socialism. They went through the storms of the Cultural Revolution and experienced the mass debates and struggles that went on at all levels of society around all kinds of questions. They saw how Mao and his revolutionary comrades called on the people to rise up and overthrow the capitalist roaders at the top levels of the communist party—the very same reaction-

aries who rule China today—and revolutionize the party and the whole society. They made revolution within a revolution. Now *that* was unprecedented—in China or anywhere else in the world!

It is true that the current movement in China is a mixed bag, and many students do see bourgeois democracy as a goal. Also there does not seem to be a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist party on the scene to lead the revolutionary struggle. But the influence of Mao and the Cultural Revolution can be seen in the way the masses of people took up the struggle and organized themselves in recent weeks. Even among the students, who grew up in the period since the revisionists seized power, there is interest in learning about how the people were able to rise up and overthrow the top bureaucrats during the Cultural Revolution.

Crisis of Revisionism

The recent upsurge has revealed and sharpened up divisions among the Chinese revisionist rulers, including in their military. Some army units reportedly refused to move on the demonstrators, and a group of high-level military officials circulated a letter advis-

ing the army against moving into Beijing. There should be no illusions about the Chinese military—it is an armed force in the service of a reactionary state, not a genuine people's liberation army as it was during Mao's time. The initial indecision and confusion at the top had to do with disagreements over how best to put down the people's revolt.

By the end of last week it appeared that Li Peng, with Deng Xiaoping behind him, had consolidated his position, reached some unity among the top political and military leaders, and seized the initiative from the demonstrators. There were reports of large numbers of new troops from other areas being moved into the Beijing area, while the numbers of people staying at Tiananmen Square dwindled.

It will take a revolution led by a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist party to overthrow the revisionists and get China back on the course charted by Mao. But even if the government is able to restore order for now, the revolt at Tiananmen has knocked the crowns off emperor Deng Xiaoping and other top officials, and the crisis and rottenness of their system are now right out in the open. □