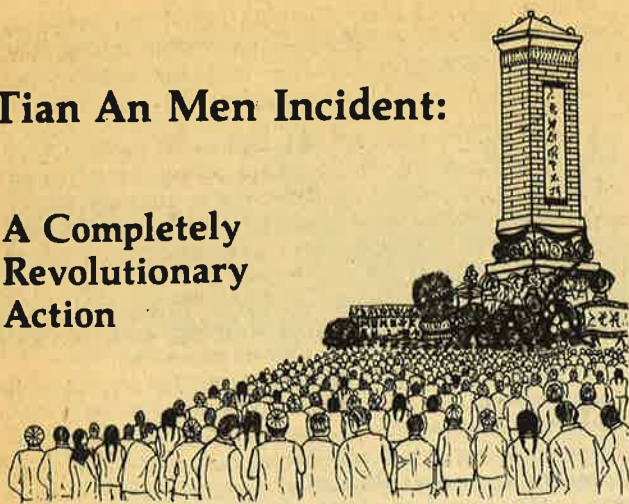


# Tian An Men Incident:

## A Completely Revolutionary Action



Tian An Men Square is a place where history has been made. In 1919, it had seen the May Fourth Movement of the Chinese people against feudalism and imperialism begin. In 1949, in Tian An Men Square, the Chinese people hoisted the first five-star red flag, the flag of New China.

On April 5, 1976, it became the battlefield where the Chinese people, as the real masters of their destiny, were fighting courageously against the gang of four and defending their socialist land.

On April 5, 1976, Tian An Men Square was packed with people. The death of the respected and beloved Premier Zhou Enlai on January 8, 1976 had given rise to universal grief. For a week, in defiance of official orders, they had been coming to the square by the hundreds of thousands to honour the memory of the late Zhou. April 4 was Qing Ming, a traditional day to commemorate the dead, used since liberation to remember and learn from revolutionary heroes. The traditional festival Qing Ming means "clear and bright", combining the memorial to the dead with the advent of full bloom spring and its activity.

Late in the evening of April 5, people in the square were attacked. Hundreds of people were injured, arrested, interrogated, harassed and punished by the gang of four forces. The press — then tightly controlled by the gang — labelled the event "a counter-revolutionary political incident." A white terror swept the country, ending only six months later, in October, when the gang of four was overthrown.

Deep-going investigation was done of the Tian An Men Incident, re-checking all facts and cases. The result of this was events were found to be completely revolutionary.

On November 16, 1978, the Beijing Municipal Party Committee, with the approval of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, issued a document which said, "The mass actions honouring the memory of Premier Zhou Enlai and denouncing the gang of four at Tian An Men Square during the Qing Ming Festival in 1976 were completely revolutionary."

On November 21 and 22, 1978, *People's Daily* carried an article titled: "The Truth About The Tian An Men Events — History Turned Upside Down Through The 'People's Daily' By The Gang Of Four Is Turned Right Side Up."

*People's Daily* had been in the hands of the gang of four, who seized its leadership; it was used by the gang as an important instrument for creating counter-revolutionary opinion. They used *People's Daily* to concoct lies and spread rumours around the time of events to mislead the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and to fool the Chinese people.

But the Chinese people were not fooled! The people knew that the incident would eventually be cleared up and across China the reaction to the announcement of the Beijing Municipal Party Committee was one of satisfaction and enthusiasm. The distortion of history by the gang of four has been set to rights.

### — PROLOGUE —

From the moment the gang of four (Wang Hongwen, Zhang Chunqiao, Jiang Qing and Yao Wenyuan) appeared, it was irrevocably antagonistic to the Chinese people. The process in which it gradually usurped a portion of Party and state power was indeed one of mounting attacks on the Chinese people. The contradiction between the masses and the gang permeated the entire course of development of Chinese history over the last dozen years. In fact, the struggle waged, to varying degrees and in different forms, by the people against the gang had been going on for a long time. Before April 5, 1976 these struggles had been scattered and had not converged to become a mass movement powerful enough to defeat the gang.

Premier Zhou Enlai was respected and loved by the Chinese people. His life was closely bound up with the victory of the Chinese revolution and the happiness of the Chinese people. During the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, Premier Zhou was the mainstay in resisting and staving off the interference and sabotage by Lin Biao and the gang of four.

To safeguard the Party and the socialist cause from destruction by the gang and to protect the proletarian revolutionaries of the older generation and the masses of people being persecuted, he fought the four through the last years of his life.

The gang of four regarded Premier Zhou as an obstacle to their seizure of Party and state power. During his lifetime, they slandered and harassed him. As soon as he died, they tried to erase his memory. Antagonism towards Premier Zhou and persecution of the revolutionary people who honoured his memory constituted the wildest acts of the gang in trying to reverse the socialist orientation in China and grossly trampling on the people's revolutionary demands.

In the growing struggle between the people and the gang, the attitude towards Premier Zhou became a touchstone for distinguishing revolutionaries from counter-revolutionaries.

Zhou Enlai died on January 8. The Chinese people were worried about the future of China. In this bitter moment, the people were forbidden to wear black arm bands or white flowers of mourning. They wore them anyway. Commemoration meetings were prohibited. The people gave their answer — as the Premier's body was carried away, for miles they lined Beijing's main boulevard, in freezing temperatures, to give their last salute. In his memory, they piled floral wreaths around the Monument to the People's Heroes in Tian An Men Square. There they read the poems they had written in their grief.

Over the next few months, they watched, with growing wrath, the developments that followed. The press, under the gang's control, published one article after another viciously attacking the late Premier.

The confrontation that had been brewing for so long erupted. The flames of hatred for the gang, long simmering in people's hearts, flared up like the eruption of a volcano. To defend Premier Zhou was to defend the revolutionary republic and the future of socialism.

### — BATTLE CALL —

On March 25, 1976 the first wreath appeared in front of the Monument to the People's Heroes. On March 30, the first eulogy in memory of Premier Zhou and challenging the gang appeared at the monument base. On hearing this, people flocked to the square, copying or putting up poems and eulogies and presenting wreaths. A poem dedicated to the Premier's memory by the workers of Plant 109 of the Chinese Academy of Sciences increased the militancy of the Chinese people. On April 4, the Qing Ming Festival, the square was a sea of mourners. It was piled with mountains of wreaths and flooded by poems and eulogies. In front of the monument lay a large portrait of Zhou with the characters "Soul of a Nation". A mother and little girl came, the child holding a white flower, with a ribbon which read "For Grandpa Zhou". A gray-haired couple, walking with canes, placed their wreath at the monument. A metal



worker appeared from the Beijing Heavy Electrical Machinery Plant. Someone put a bowl of water and another of earth at the monument base in memory of the Premier whose ashes had been scattered, at his own request, on the fields and rivers of China.

Traffic was blocked; choruses of the *Internationale* were heard across the square; at night people used flashlights and matches to read the poems.

Among the mourners were workers, students, government functionaries, liberation army men and women, scientists and technicians, peasants and housewives. From early morning to late night, over two million came, on the side of revolution.

Ropes were strung up to hold the slogans and papers, saying: "Cherish the memory of Premier Zhou", "Carry the Revolution Through to the End", "If Demons Dare to Whip Up Troubles, the People Will Rise and Wipe Them Out!"

#### — COUNTERATTACK—

The gang of four, plotting to seize power, decided to act. They had labelled the people's commemoration of Premier Zhou "counter-revolutionary" from the beginning. They called the Qing Ming Festival a festival of ghosts and an out-dated convention.

They published denunciations of the Chinese people in the press. They sent "plainclothesmen" into the square to spy and report on the people.

Arrests began on April 3. In the middle of the night of the 4th, 200 trucks drove into the square and removed the wreaths, poems and banners and the people guarding them were arrested.

At dawn on April 5, people arrived to find the square empty and three rows of guards surrounding the monument, preventing anyone from approaching it.

#### — BATTLE —

As news of this spread through Beijing, the people streamed furiously to the square. The people appeared with more wreaths and poems. They issued direct challenges to the gang of four: "In our grief we hear the demons shrieking./ While we weep the wolves and jackals laugh./ Shedding tears, we come to mourn our hero./ Heads raised, we unsheath our swords."

A railway worker pledged, "Beloved Premier Zhou, we will defend you with our blood and our lives! ... by a member of the younger generation loyal to the Chinese proletariat."

This poem on a wreath at the monument: "The people love the people's premier, the people's premier loves the people...." And another: "Let us wipe the tears from our eyes,/ Make our last bow of reverence/ And go back and sharpen our swords!/ His death is not the end of struggle,/ His death is his eternal monument./ Let us wipe the tears from our eyes,/ Dear Premier,/ In this, our last-ditch battle,/ Take everlasting consolation./ Let us wipe the tears from our eyes./ Comrades,/ Go back and sharpen your swords!" And another: "His last drop of lifeblood was for the people,/ His memory will shed its fragrance/ For ten thousand years./ Whoever dares attack our Premier/ Is like a mad dog barking at the sun —/ To hell with you!"

The people demanded to present their wreaths and demanded

## AGAINST SUBJECTIVISM

During a span of more than fifty years, four major rectification campaigns in the Communist Party of China, which had Mao Zedong as a leader, had as topics at the head of their agendas: subjectivism, subjectivism, subjectivism and subjectivism.

You have stood against the worst barrage that has come. You have stood against the worst reactionaries. You have stood seemingly alone, without hope. You have spit anti-people scum in the eye.

Why, then, jump like popping corn in a hot pan when we, your comrades, make a light criticism? Why not realize subjectivism is a problem? Why try to drown yourself in a sea of your own tears?

I rage with fury.

Why consciously dive deeper when you appeal for help and are told "Swim!" Why avoid discussing what's on your mind? Why pass the buck onto your comrades? Why allow personal umbrage, arising from wrong perceptions of us treating you with contempt, to lead you to treat us contemptuously?

I rage with fury against subjectivism.

Why view our educational aid as a surprise attack or retaliation? Why fear criticism as you fear being slit open stomach to neck and having someone casually eat your heart right before your eyes? (Why brand us as not only doing it but enjoying doing it?)

I rage with fury.

Why revel in distance from your comrades, even seeming to forget our names? Why resent directives when all, including you, demanded of leading comrades that they take up the leadership role? Why forget so very easily that we have all toiled together?

I rage with fury against subjectivism.

Why slam all the doors shut and pull all the shutters closed (without even checking to see if others' fingers are out of the way!) so as to block the collective process from touching the individual? Why perpetuate the subjectivism making the rounds, as contagious as a plague?

I rage with fury.

Why speak such uncomradely phrases, so lacking in humility? ("Who me? Never! Commit that error? I could never do that.") Why try to identify verdicts to be reversed through an inclination for personal vindication rather than scientific analysis?

I rage with fury against subjectivism.

Why miss the bullseye, not only being right off the mark but stopping fifty feet short of the target? Why pursue the practice of a debating society where "points" are bestowed on the best confusion monger?

I rage with fury.

Why don't you acknowledge that subjectivism will be with us for a long time? Why base criticism on a single incident? Why be speculative? Why complain of being tired so as to avoid struggle? Why be condescending? Why not acknowledge that your comrades get tired of constant refusal to change?

I rage with fury against subjectivism.

Why have us prepare the outline of a plan for transformation only to have you fold it up and shove it in your pocket? Why get down in the mouth, not only forgetting your commitment to our work but beginning to question whether there should be revolutionary work?

I rage with fury.

Why, in seeking support for all that demands to be done, are we faced with your ass which greets the sky because your head is buried in the sand? Why refuse to bathe in struggle, to purify developing proletarian views, to peel away with flame old bourgeois ideas, to emerge transformed?

I rage with fury against subjectivism.

Why hesitate and whine ("the struggle's getting too hot") when it is only by your choice that you dally about this fire? Why can't you see that steel cannot be made in anything but very, very high temperatures?

I rage with fury.

Why do I make the error of being occupied with the worst in you, comrade? Why do I forget your contributions all too easily, comrade? We should fight against subjectivism. We should fear criticism never again.

I rage with fury against subjectivism.

In the two line struggle I do not place my hands around your neck. Comrade, we should go hand in hand to face the problem and find its solution.

George Steffler





Some of the wreaths commemorating Zhou Enlai in Tian An Men Square on April 4, 1976.

the return of the stolen wreaths and poems. In front of the Great Hall of the People, a cry rang out: "Return our wreaths! Return our Comrades!"

The Chinese people were enraged. The police accused the people of trying to break into the Great Hall.

The sabotage and suppression was being directed from a two-storey building on the square. The people surrounded it, and sent in three representatives to demand the return of their wreaths and comrades. The headquarters leader refused to see them. His car was parked outside the building. The people overturned and burned it. They also set fire to the building. The people's suppressors inside, escaped through windows.

The square was packed. No one tried to stop the fire. State property was burning, but the people believed that they were striking against the fascist actions of the gang and ignored the possible consequences.

In the dark of the night on April 5, the gang sent their militia to the square with clubs and other weapons. The militia savagely beat the unarmed masses in the square.

The gang then issued the false reports on the "counter-revolutionary" incident. The gang thought they had won. Instead, their fascist actions were a catalyst in educating and mobilizing the people against them.

On the day after the bloodshed, people again flocked to the square to protest the atrocities of April 5. On the night of April 7, after the article in *People's Daily*, calling the incident counter-revolutionary, was broadcast over the radio, people covered the streets with slogans denouncing the gang. Letters poured into the paper's office. One addressed to "Editor Goebbels" was signed "A worker militia present at Tian An Men". The letter exposed the gang's lies and concluded, "This 'Reichstag Fire' you waged wasn't very bright!"

#### — VICTORY —

The people carried on their struggle in other forms over the months to come. They also managed to preserve the revolutionary poems and photos of Tian An Men. (One person took his copies of the poems home and buried them; another buried his copies in the Western Hills near Beijing; others hid them in flower pots or the linings of coal stoves.)

The Tian An Men incident helped more and more people see the real nature of the gang and strengthened the resolve of the Chinese people to fight back.

In October 1976, the gang of four was smashed by the CPC Central Committee, headed by Chairman Hua Guofeng. This act turned the people's wishes into reality; the revolutionary actions of the masses had sounded the death knell of the gang.

In the history of mankind, no true emancipation of the people from oppression has ever been brought about in the absence of their own independent, valiant and conscious struggle. "Creative activity at the grass roots is the basic factor of the new public life." (Lenin: *Meeting of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee*)

The revolutionary mass movement centring on the Tian An Men Square was an eruption of the fury of the people against the gang of four and a general outbreak of the prolonged struggle waged by the

Party and the people. That the gang maintained power for as long as a decade and more was because the people had not universally come to an awakening. But once they had awakened and pitched into the battle, it meant the downfall of the gang.

This revolutionary movement was a struggle between people's democracy and the gang's fascist autocracy and between Marxist scientific socialism and the gang's feudal socialism. Its occurrence prepared the most important condition — the masses — for the final collapse of the gang.

In spite of the lies spread by the gang before it fell, the people called the nationwide revolutionary movement of Tian An Men the great April Fifth Movement.

In China today, this is felt even more deeply. As one commentator put it: "This revolutionary people's movement stands on par with the May Fourth Movement of 1919. The May Fourth Movement opened the Chinese people's democratic revolution. The April Fifth Movement has begun a new era in China's history. It proved the Chinese people's political maturity. They have their destiny in their own hands, know the importance of developing and using socialist democracy and law, and know how to prevent servants of the people from turning into masters of the people."

It is the people who, through their own struggle, have written a magnificent prelude to the advent of a new period of Chinese history marked by the smashing of the gang of four. It has been shown again by practice, that the people alone are the motive force of world history.

#### — CULTURAL EVENTS SINCE APRIL 5, 1976 —

Since the toppling of the gang of four, the Chinese people have been popularizing the lessons learned through their poetry, literature and plays.

A book of 600 poems from among those posted at Tian An Men Square in April 1976 will be printed soon. These poems were once confiscated and banned by the gang of four. But the people, at great personal risk, copied them and hid them.

These poems sincerely expressed the people's mourning for Premier Zhou, laid bare the gang's wild political ambitions, reactionary theories, vile practices and infamous past, and gave tremendous encouragement to the people. *Wenyibao*, a Chinese literature review, said, "Their importance in the history of Chinese literature cannot be erased."

There have been two significant plays written about the Tian An Men incident.

*Where the Silence Is* was the first Chinese play to appear with the Tian An Men incident as its background.

"Thunder comes from where the silence is" is a famous line from a poem written by Lu Xun in the 1930s. At that time, the reactionaries rode roughshod over the Chinese people who suffered in silence. Aware of the pent-up wrath of the people, the poet predicted that the thunder of revolution was bound to stike soon. The play takes its title from this poem.

In artistic form *Where the Silence Is* condenses and accurately generalizes the whys and hows of the revolutionary April Fifth Movement. It shows how the various classes and political forces in China acted in this struggle and what their respective political endings were.

*Loyal Hearts*, another play, concentrates on love and hatred. The plot deals with the period between the Fourth National People's Congress in January 1975 and January 9, 1976 when the news of Premier Zhou's death was announced. It concentrates on the Chinese people's love and respect for Premier Zhou and their deep hatred for the gang of four. At the end of the play, the Premier dies, but his spirit, his ideals and his loyal heart encourage the people in their lives and the struggle to be faced. Herein lies the significance of this play.

The Chinese people have recorded for all time the events of the April Fifth Movement. They have written this proud chapter with their own blood.