

TIANANMEN 1989 天安門

**AN EXHIBIT ON THE CHINESE PEOPLE'S
HEROIC STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY**



**WASHINGTON, DC
JUNE-DECEMBER 2022**

INTRODUCTION

Tiananmen 1989 is the most extensive exhibit ever mounted in the U.S. on the Chinese people's heroic struggle for democracy in 1989. It features narrative boards and numerous physical items from 1989 including flags, pamphlets, artwork, a tent, and a shirt that became blood soaked when the wearer was severely beaten during the military crackdown in Beijing on June 3-4, 1989, an event known as the June 4 Massacre. The exhibit is arranged by Dan Wang and Fensuo Zhou, the number 1 and number 5 student leaders on Chinese government's most wanted list, and David Yu, a veteran democracy campaigner. The exhibit is in the second-floor temporary gallery of the new Victims of Communism Museum in Washington, DC. **Free tickets are available at vocmuseum.org.**



A general view of the exhibit.

NARRATIVE BOARDS

The exhibit recounts the events in 1989 with a set of 8 English/Chinese bilingual narrative boards. Below are the English texts on the boards and images of related items and the boards themselves.

BOARD 1: INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 1989, Tiananmen Square in Beijing was the epicenter of massive pro-democracy demonstrations that spread to over 100 Chinese cities and involved over 100 million people. Unprecedented in scale in a communist country, these demonstrations brought keenly felt self-confidence, strength and hope to the participants and the society at large.

To hold on to its dictatorship, the Chinese Communist Party mobilized the military as well as the full force of the party and state machinery to crush the demonstrations on June 3-4, 1989. The CCP claimed that about 300 people were killed. Estimates by NGOs, news media and foreign intelligence agencies ranged from 2,000 to 10,000 killed. The June 4 Massacre, as the bloody crackdown has been called, is the most brazen crime in the annals of world communism.

The demonstrations and the June 4 Massacre helped ignite the upheavals in Eastern Europe between 1989 and 1991, which led to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The June 4 Massacre also marked the return and extension of CCP's complete



control over the political and civil participation by Chinese citizens. Once masked by rapid economic growth, this harsh reality has become increasingly clear recently. The June 4 Massacre is the root cause of some of the most intractable and potentially explosive contradictions in today's China.

This exhibit is dedicated to all those who struggled, suffered and died in 1989 for a free, democratic and just China.

BOARD 2: PRECUSORS

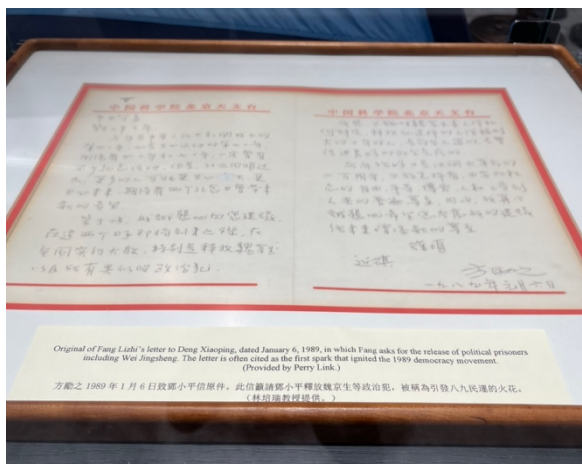
Not long after CCP dictator Mao Zedong's death in 1976, the new leader Deng Xiaoping enacted economic reform and opening to tackle the wreckage Mao had left behind. Deng at the same time made clear that CCP would not tolerate any challenge to its dictatorship. He imprisoned Wei Jingsheng and other dissidents, and periodically waged political campaigns against people both in and outside of CCP whose views were deemed liberal. The repressive policy caused discontent to grow and in December 1986 led to a wave of peaceful student demonstrations calling for political change. Deng's reaction was to wage a new "anti-bourgeois liberalization" campaign and force the reformist party leader Hu Yaobang to resign. In the following two years, with



the economic reform faltering and official corruption becoming rampant, discontent swelled alarmingly.

In January 1989, astrophysicist Fang Lizhi, who had been dismissed from his college job in early 1987 because of his liberal views, wrote to Deng requesting that Wei be released. His open letter was followed by several others by well-known intellectuals calling for the release of political prisoners and political reform. The CCP leaders refused to address these issues, and a stalemate ensued between the authorities on one hand and the liberal intellectuals and students on the other.

Hu's sudden death on April 15 turned the stalemate into open confrontation.

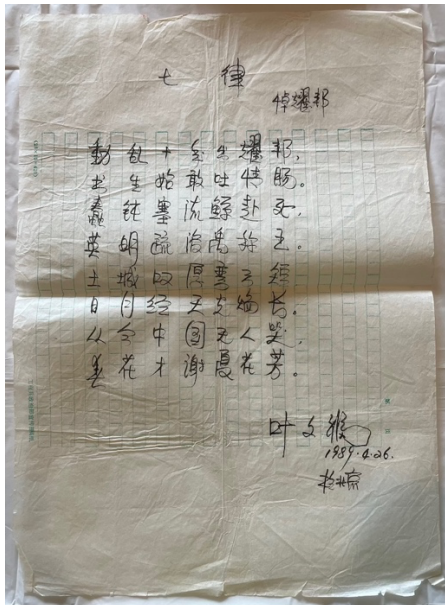


An original copy of Fang Lizhi's January 6, 1989 letter to Deng Xiaoping, provided by Perry Link, on display at the exhibit. Fang's use of correction fluid is clearly visible.

BOARD 3: DEMONSTRATIONS

After Hu's death, students in Beijing spontaneously mourned for him. They also petitioned for the reexamination of the anti-liberalization campaign, rehabilitation of Hu, and political reform. Their petition received no response, the media ignored student activities, and some students were beaten. Dissatisfied, students held large-scale demonstrations and began to organize. Li Peng and other hardliners believed that the CCP regime was in danger and pressed for suppression.

On April 26, in accordance with Deng's edict, an editorial in *People's Daily*



Original of a poem by army poet Ye Wenfu mourning the death of Hu Yaobang, on display at the exhibit. Like many others who had run into troubles with the authorities previously, Ye had premonitions of impending upheaval.



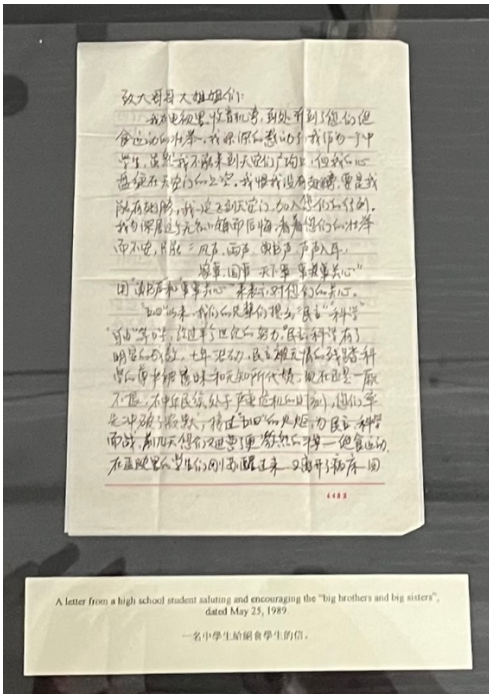
characterized student demonstrations as part of a conspiracy to foment unrest and shake CCP's position of power. It ignored all student demands. The editorial caused widespread outrage. On April 27, hundreds of thousands of people in many cities held protests. The failure to threaten the students into submission caused the hardliners to lose ground.

On May 4, reformist party leader Zhao Ziyang proposed diffusing the situation through dialogues and by democratic means and the rule of law. Zhao's speech was well received, and many students resumed classes. However, the promised dialogues did not happen, and it soon became clear that Zhao was unable to overturn the Deng edict that equated student demonstrations with unrest.

BOARD 4: HUNGER STRIKE

On May 13, hundreds of students went on hunger strike in Tiananmen Square. Their demands included dialogues and recognition that student demonstrations were a patriotic democratic movement. Their self-sacrifice moved the nation, and many people helped them. On May 17, a million people marched in Beijing in support of the students.

A short period of “press freedom” began in early May, and the May 17 march was prominently and positively reported by the media.



A letter by a high school student saluting and encouraging the students in Tiananmen Square, on display at the exhibit. Wang Dan and other student leaders received many such letters from all social groups including army officers.

TIANANMEN 天安門 1989 HUNGER STRIKE 絕食

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These developments shocked the hardliners to the core. They concluded that Zhao must go, and the demonstrations must be suppressed without delay.

On May 18, Li met with Wang Dan, Wuer Kaixi and other student leaders. He refused to address the student demands and wanted only to discuss how to end the hunger strike. In fact, by this time, Deng had already decided to impose martial law.

People’s Daily’s prominent, positive coverage of the massive demonstrations on May 17.

Zhao visits students on hunger strike in the early morning of May 19. 5月19日清晨，國家副總理趙紫陽到天安門廣場看望絕食學生。

5月13日，數百名學生開始在天安門廣場絕食。學生的訴求，包括開放政壇和承認學業與民主運動。學生的自我犧牲精神感動了社會各階層，人們紛紛提供支持和保護。

5月上旬，中國出現了為期兩個星期的“新聞自由”。對5月17日的大遊行，媒體的廣泛加以報導。

5月16日，趙紫陽披露鄧小平在中共內部的太上皇地位。5月17日，一批知識分子發表宣言，指責鄧小平在文革後讓步給黨高層。

中共領導層震怒火冒，下定了決心打壓抗議聲，儘快鎮壓民主運動的決心。

5月18日，李鵬與王丹、劉曉原等學生領袖會談。李鵬對學生的訴求表示理解，只願談談如何結束絕食。其實，此時鄧小平已決定實行戒嚴。

《人民日報》在國際版刊登 國際版5月17日 0392-3817

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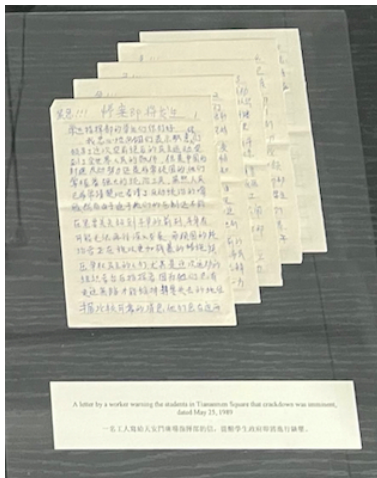
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BOARD 5: MARTIAL LAW

On May 17, Deng called a meeting of the politburo standing committee at his home. He refused to yield to students and proposed imposing martial law. Zhao disagreed, but most in attendance assented. Zhao was in effect stripped of his powers after this meeting. In the evening of May 19, Li announced martial law at a meeting. Zhao refused to preside over the meeting or to attend.

The martial law was widely condemned and resisted. Most troops assigned to enforce martial law were prevented from entering Beijing by throngs of residents. Students in Tiananmen Square established a command center headed by Chai Ling to deal with the new reality. However, there were disagreements over whether to stay in the square or to avoid unnecessary sacrifice and withdraw. By June 3, there were still many students in the square.



A letter by a worker warning the students in Tiananmen Square that crackdown was imminent, on display at the exhibit.



Wang Dan calls for withdrawal from Tiananmen Square, New York Times front page, May 28, 1989, reprint on display at the exhibit.

BOARD 6: MASSACRE

After some minor scuffles between the martial law troops and the residents who had tried to block them, CCP hardliners falsely claimed that an insurrection was underway in Beijing and ordered the troops to reach Tiananmen Square at all costs.

In the evening of June 3, troops armed with tanks and machine guns fired at anyone who tried to block their way, killing hundreds. Some angry residents attacked the troops and their vehicles with rocks and incendiary bottles. After



“Mom, Please Ask Them ...”, artwork by Hong Kong artist Jin Jiangnan immediately after the June 4 massacre, in mourning of Lu Peng, age 9, the youngest known fatality, on display at the exhibit. “I feel cold ... Why did the soldiers make 9 holes in my body?”



the troops arrived at Tiananmen Square in the early hours of June 4, the remaining students withdrew amid gunfire and taunts.

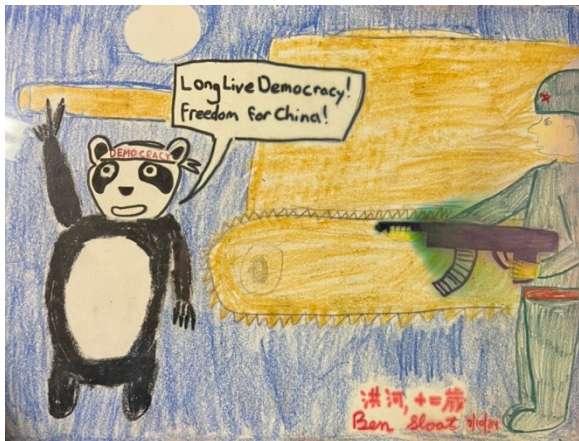
The massacre continued after June 4. 1,000 miles from Tiananmen, Chengdu was the scene of a bloody crackdown on June 4-6 that caused dozens of deaths. US Representative Andy Levin, who was touring Chengdu at the time, risked his own life trying to reason with deranged soldiers.

Due to CCP’s efforts to erase the events of 1989 from history, no relatively complete list of those killed on June 3-4, 1989 is known to exist. The list compiled by Tiananmen Mothers includes about 200 Chinese names. The total killed is believed to be in thousands.

BOARD 7: AFTERMATH

Spontaneous resistance continued for a while after June 4. Once the CCP hardliners regained control, they began a massive wave of arrests and purges. Zhao was formally removed as party leader, and many reformists within CCP were demoted, dismissed or detained. The massacre drew a torrent of denunciations and sanctions, and the 10-year reform came to an abrupt halt. It was not until early 1992, when Deng reiterated the need to resurrect the reform, that the society began to recover.

To erase the memory of the massacre, the CCP has consistently prohibited discussions of the events in 1989. It is the purpose of this exhibit to help retain the memory of 1989 and promote social justice and democracy in China.



Artwork by American boy Ben Sloat, age 12, dated July 10, 1989, on display at the exhibit. The world came together to condemn the brutality of the CCP regime, mourn the loss of so many young lives, and pledge support for the Chinese people's struggle for democracy.



The credit section of Board 7. Many people contributed to the exhibit.

BOARD 8: IN MEMORIAM

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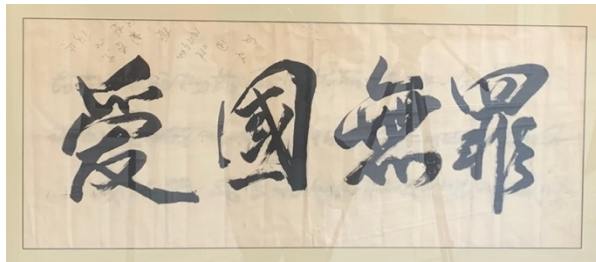
TIANANMEN 1989 天安門 1989 IN MEMORIAM 追思

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由於中共一直抹殺六四屠殺的歷史，人們至今得不到完整的遇難者名單。以上由天安門母親從奧美整理的名單約有200人。實際死亡人數，據估計數千人。

Ding Zilin, founder of Tiananmen Mothers. Her son Jiang Jielian, 17, was killed the night of June 3.
丁子霖是天安門母親的創始人。她17歲的小兒子蔣捷廉於6月3日夜被槍殺。

Family members of massacre victims meet in 2019. 六四屠殺三十週年紀念。



“Patriotism Is No Crime”, calligraphy found in Tiananmen Square by an American teacher on May 25, 1989, on display at the exhibit.



“Give Back My Compatriots”, banner found in a Beijing Street by an American academic, likely shortly after June 4, on display at the exhibit. The untidiness of the writing may reflect the writer’s anger and anguish.



Photo by Andrea Worden of a demonstration in Changsha shortly after June 4, with a “Give Back the Students” banner.

2. Nanjing Flag



Like dozens of other Chinese cities, Nanjing witnessed massive demonstrations and the formation of independent student organizations. This flag belonged to the Independent Student Union of Southeast University in Nanjing.

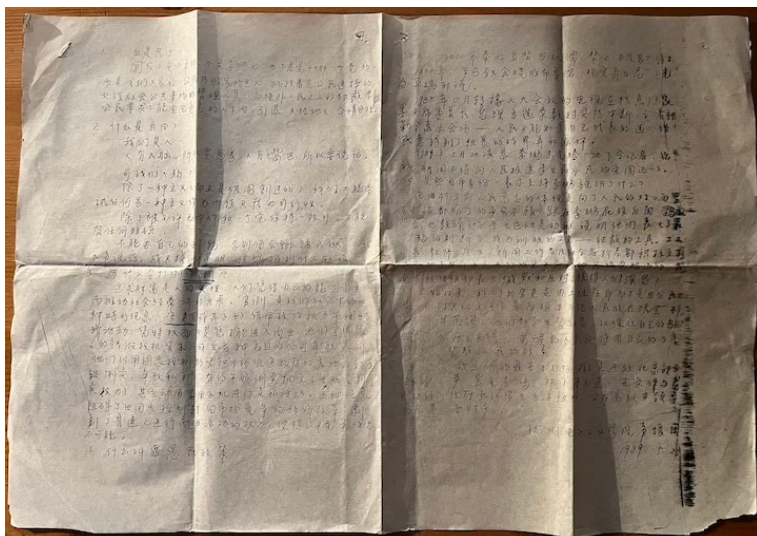
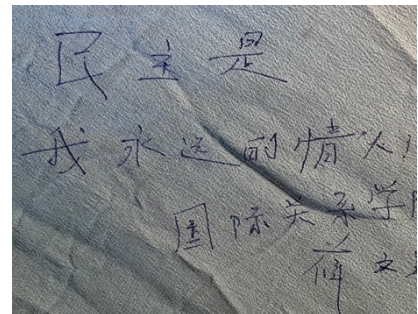
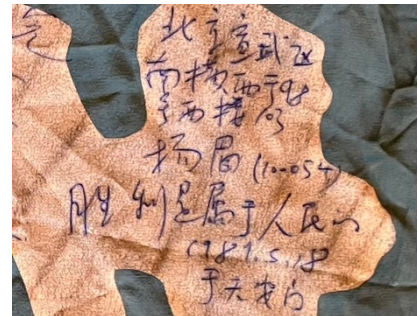
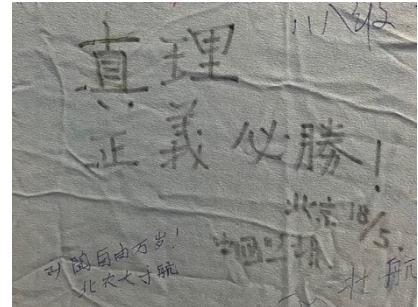
Right: A seal and a security patrol team arm band of the Union, on display at the exhibit.



3. Shenzhen Flag



During the tense standoff between the CCP regime and the students in Tiananmen Square in May, students from other cities came to Beijing to show their support. This official Shenzhen University flag, brought to Tiananmen Square by the students of that university, bears upbeat, heroic, and even poetic inscriptions by over 90 people. They include “Truth and Justice shall prevail!”, “Long live press freedom!”, “Victory belongs to the people”, “Democracy is my forever lover” and “Carry on till the end, no regret even in death”.



Flag details.

Left: A handbill by Hangzhou College of Electrical Engineering's delegation to Beijing, on display at the exhibit.

4. Tent



Many students lived in tents in Tiananmen Square during demonstrations and hunger strike. The tents were donated, and many were Nikko brand donated by Hong Kong residents. According to the provider of this tent, who slept in it for a week, he was ordered by martial law troops to leave the square immediately in the early hours of June 4. He quickly folded the tent, put it in a large water bucket together with other belongings, and retreated with other students.



A tent cluster in Tiananmen Square.

5. Bloody Shirt

Jiang Lin was a reporter for the army newspaper. In the evening of June 3, she decided to find out what was going on. She was accompanied by Zhang Sheng, son of former defense minister Zhang Aiping. This is what happened next according to the May 28, 2019 edition of *New York Times*:



“Near midnight, Ms. Jiang approached Tiananmen Square, where soldiers stood silhouetted against the glow of fires. An elderly gatekeeper begged her not to go on, but Ms. Jiang said she wanted to see what would happen. Suddenly, over a dozen armed police officers bore down on her, and some beat her with electric prods. Blood gushed from her head, and Ms. Jiang fell.”

Zhang Sheng was injured too, but he managed to help carry Jiang to a passing car, which took her to a hospital. Her shirt became blood-soaked that night.

Right: Jiang’s press identification.



FUTURE PLAN

The host organization of the *Tiananmen 1989* exhibit is the June 4 Massacre Memorial Association (64MMA). 64MMA plans to establish a permanent **June 4 Memorial Museum** in New York. Incorporating the content of this exhibit, the museum will carry on the work of the June 4 Memorial Museum in Hong Kong, which was shuttered by the CCP regime in 2021. **We urgently need your support! For further information, including on how to make donations, please visit jinian64.org.**



Tiananmen 1989 exhibit address:
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