



Micah Morrison

THE ROAD TO REVOLT IN CHINA

The Democracy movement's intelligence chief recounts victory and defeat in Tiananmen Square.

Xin Ku means hardship. It is the name adopted by a 22-year-old student activist only now coming back to earth after a dizzying ride in the stratosphere of revolutionary dreams and delusions. For by the end, when the tanks and the troops were sowing death in Tiananmen, it was clear that revolution was precisely what the student-led movement had come to be all about: the fall of the Chinese Communist party and its replacement with "democracy."

It didn't begin that way. Xin Ku (pronounced "Shin Coo") and his comrades initially saw themselves as reformers, not revolutionaries. A physics major at Lanzhou University in the Gansu Province, Xin Ku began his political odyssey in 1987 by founding a "democracy salon" discussion group to talk about China's social problems. I spoke with him one long summer night, with the help of several translators, in downtown New York only a few weeks after his escape from China. He is an intense young man, precise, cautious, and somewhat shellshocked. He had requested that I submit my questions in advance, and his careful replies, read from notes in Chinese characters before him and promptly translated into English, were full of colorless political slogans. He seemed impatient and confused by my efforts to elicit anecdotes and details that might bring the story to life; my job, rather, was to convey the messages of the revolution. I was reminded of Lenin's humorlessness, although Xin Ku had an equal share of a boy's sweet naiveté and a revolutionist's cunning. "You see these clothes," he said, peering at me through wire-rimmed glasses and gesturing to his red polo shirt and stonewashed jeans. "These clothes are

what I wore on Tiananmen Square. I will always wear these clothes. I will always wear red to remember the blood that was shed in Peking."

In the heady days of April and May Xin Ku quickly rose to a powerful position in the democracy movement, becoming the director of intelligence and security for the student leadership. Conditions for the interview stipulated that few details would be disclosed about his escape from China and current activities of the Chinese underground, and that Xin Ku would be allowed to review the article in advance to prevent inadvertent disclosures. Several independent sources within the Chinese-American community confirm Xin Ku's identity; while he adds some new brushstrokes to the tale of Tiananmen, the existing record confirms virtually every detail of his story. For the immediate future Xin Ku will be at-

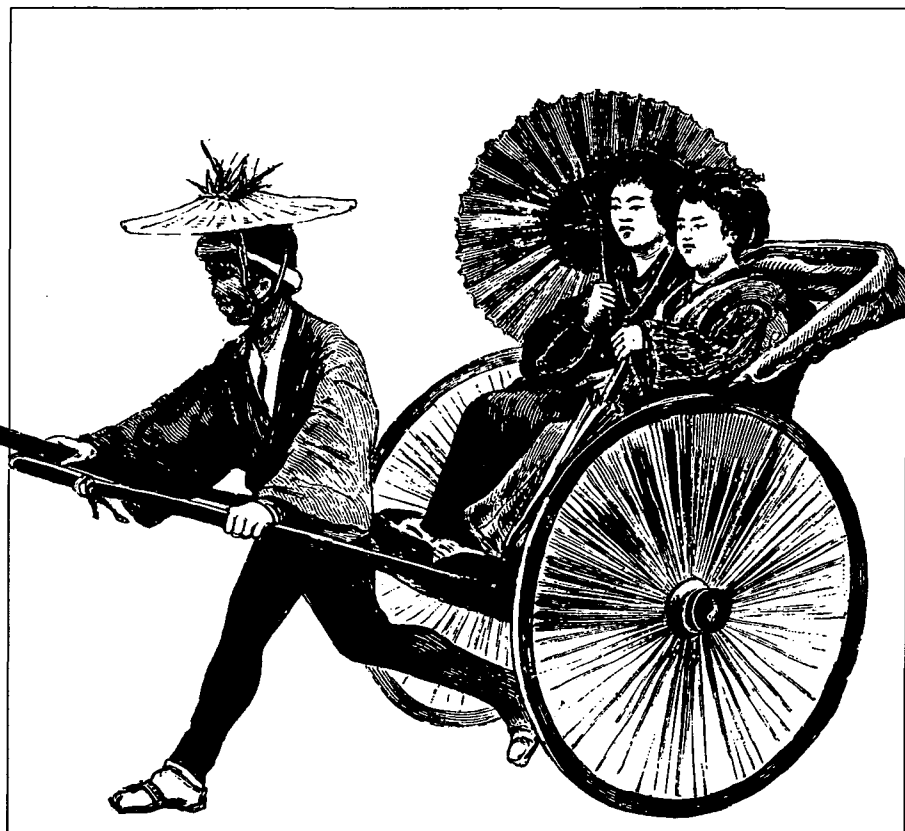
tending an Ivy League university to complete his studies and improve his English, but for him life is elsewhere. He says his fate is now irredeemably wedded to the cause of democracy in China. The vow is sealed with the blood of his fallen friends.

"I wasn't interested in politics at the beginning," Xin Ku told me, "but in man's basic human rights." For all the progress made in the last decade of relative openness, the ordinary Chinese citizen continues to live in a web of official corruption and indifference so vast it is difficult for an American to conceive. Low-level bureaucrats, often in league with local gangsters, exercise absolute control over the populace. Freedom of association and freedom of the press are severely restricted. Murders and rapes, as well

as petty crimes, are often ignored by the authorities. Bribes are necessary for everything. To speak one's mind is to risk jail or loss of job. Xin Ku soon became convinced that "political action was the only way to safeguard human rights. By human rights we mean preventing the constant indignities inflicted on human beings every day all over China." These indignities, he noted, were what provided the real fuel for the democracy movement.

It began at universities throughout China. The students initially sought a modicum of freedom of speech and a free press, some independence of the legal system as a check against state power, and government action against corruption. In short, a modest liberalization of the system. China's recent inflation was another factor, undermining the wage base of urban and rural workers and serving to shore up worker support for the students. "When the students stood up," Xin Ku said, "many people, including workers, supported us. Why did they support us? Because *their* lives cannot be protected, *their* property cannot be protected. There was—and is—a great deal of dissatisfaction and resentment, and so the demands of the students met the concerns of the people. These demands were the origin of our movement."

Events started to move quickly in late March. On March 20, Premier Li Peng gave a speech signaling a retreat from China's narrow economic liberalization of recent years; at the same time, student-led protests were springing up at universities and in cities around the country. On April 15, the former Communist party general secretary, Hu Yaobang, identified with the reformist faction of the Politburo and purged in 1987 after falling out with maximum leader Deng Xiaoping, departed from the land of the living. Peking marches to mark his death brought tens of thousands of citizens into the streets



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and jolted the democracy movement out of low gear.

Xin Ku, by this time a student leader at Lanzhou University, traveled to the neighboring provincial capital of Xian for a protest march, then returned to his campus. A student network was coordinating activities throughout China and, although regional protests continued, a decision was reached to focus efforts on Peking. The decision seems to have been based in part on the leading role of the Peking Students Association—already stirring things up in the capital; in part to take advantage of the momentum caused by Hu's death; and in part to make full use of Gorbachev's impending visit, which the students correctly calculated would draw world attention. Xin Ku led a large cadre of students from Lanzhou to Peking. "At this point," Xin Ku said, "we still hoped for reformist government actions to protect the rights of the people."

With students pouring into the capital for the protests, student leadership factions began efforts to organize an efficient command structure. "In the beginning of the movement, the formation of the leadership was not a result of organized elections," Xin Ku said. "The leaders came up because of their demonstrated efforts and dedication. I became the leader of the intelligence and security division. Initially, my job was simply to analyze information coming to us. About a dozen people worked directly under me and many more worked under this core group. I myself, toward the end, had three bodyguards and six secretaries. Information came to us from many sources, including high-level members of the Politburo and military officials. At certain moments, transcripts of Politburo meetings were passed to me and military officials informed me in advance of army movements."

A month would pass before the students became fully organized. Eventually, the leaders of the Peking Students Association and the leaders from student groups outside Peking united to create a governing structure that included a headquarters group, a financial department, a media-relations division, an operation for public address on Tiananmen, an intelligence and security division, a small police force for maintaining order on the square, and other departments. "Our division [intelligence and security] became responsible for protecting the student leaders and hunger strikers, as well as for gauging the overall safety of all the students on the square. To do this, we needed to ascertain the reactions of the government and take appropriate measures to respond to those

actions. This included monitoring the movements of the military. In addition to information coming to us from the military, we sent out bands of student scouts who would return with material for analysis. Also, many people simply came in with information." One must assume, however, that the not unfor-

acre plaza put crowd figures upward of one million. Support for the students was flowing in from every level of society, even the secret police, according to Xin Ku. It was a heroic moment for the young leaders of the democracy movement, and an intoxicating one.

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midable Chinese intelligence apparatus had penetrated the student organization. The possibility that it was being manipulated at times with disinformation should not be ruled out.

By late April the crowds of protesters had grown to more than 100,000 and the world was beginning to take notice of events in Peking. On both sides, the stakes were getting higher. "The government was taking a rigid and hostile attitude toward us," Xin Ku said. "This represented a setback. We decided to escalate the movement to involve all the people." A hunger strike was launched, involving at its peak more than 3,600 students and workers, according to the student intelligence chief.

"The hunger strike represented a change of goals," he said. Before the strike, the students sought government reform—"an end to indifference and neglect," in Xin Ku's words. "But when we realized it was not possible to get the government to change, we decided on the hunger strike to mobilize the people, to raise consciousness about conditions in China. We aimed both at the Chinese people and at the rest of the world. From the period of the beginning of the hunger strike to its close three days before Gorbachev's arrival [May 15] our actions raised the awareness of people around the globe about the lack of freedom in China. At this point, we felt we had totally succeeded in our goal [of the second phase] of raising consciousness and moving the world by our cause."

Thus by the time of Gorbachev's visit—which turned out to be essentially a sideshow—the students were riding high. They had immobilized Peking with barricades and protests and infuriated the ruling regime. Rumors of Politburo power struggles were sweeping the streets. Victory seemed imminent: the hunger strike was a success, the Gorbachev visit had been interrupted and eclipsed, the world media were flocking to the students' tent city on the square, and some estimates of the mid-May demonstrations on Tiananmen's 100-

said, "our direction changed again. The students no longer recognized the government." On May 24, in an instance of revolutionary hubris that may have sealed their fate, Xin Ku and the rest of the leadership "urged that an emergency meeting of the National People's Congress [the rubber stamp parliament] be convened to dismantle the present government and impeach Li Peng."

The goals of the democracy movement were escalating: first had come the calls for reform; then the hunger strike to "raise consciousness" had brought a sense of victory; now the idea, swirling in the turmoil of that Peking spring, was to bring down the government. "We needed to continue the mobilization of the people, and so we organized teams to go into the country to promulgate democracy. At the same time, I realized that relying on methods such as this and the hunger strike would not allow us to attain the final victory. We needed

With Gorbachev's departure on May 19, events began to take a sinister turn. Martial law was imposed, the reputedly reform-inclined party leader Zhao Ziyang soon dropped out of sight, and troop movements picked up in and around Peking. "After the imposition of martial law," Xin Ku

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to engage in long-term struggle. Therefore I began to form underground organizations to stay in China and carry on. Obviously, I can say little about these organizations. A network was established in seventeen cities and we have printing presses and methods of communication. But we need money.

"The groups are capable of being very active," Xin Ku continued, growing increasingly vague. "They have the ability to do many things. In the political and economic crises to come, there are many possibilities." He emphatically denied that the students had contact with the CIA or any American officials during the spring months. Private U.S. citizens—"tourists and peace groups," he says—donated or attempted to donate money, but often were blocked by Chinese authorities. "Also at the time of the decision to form underground organizations—roughly the period from May 20 to May 30—we began to plan for our Democracy University and solicit funds for the Goddess of Liberty."

But time was running out. Intelligence forecasts were grim. "As of June 1, we knew there would be violent action against us." Splits had begun to develop in the student leadership. On May 20, Wuer Kai Xi, the student leader best known to the West, broke from the others and urged a withdrawal from the square. "To escape at that point would have been an admission of failure," Xin Ku remarked. "The leadership felt it would be inappropriate to escape and admit defeat. Wuer Kai Xi's call did not reflect the collective decision of the leadership, although he implied it did. Because of this, he was relieved of his duties."

Looking back, was Wuer Kai Xi right? "Even if we did not have to witness the bloody repression by the tanks," Xin Ku replied, "we knew nevertheless that we would have to face other forms of repression: arrest, exile, loss of jobs." They decided to stay. "We wanted to trade our lives for the ideals of freedom and democracy."

They didn't have to wait long for the trading day to arrive. "At 6:00 p.m. on June 3 I got a telephone call. The government had made the final decision to spill the blood of the students. I hurried back to Tiananmen Square." Over the preceding weeks the number of students in the square had dropped. Xin Ku estimates that on the night of June 3 there were about 5,000 students gathered around the Martyrs' Monument, an obelisk with wide steps at the center of the action in Tiananmen. The student leaders able to reach Tiananmen waited nervously on the steps of the monument. For days army

units had been probing the streets of Peking and, it was rumored, assembling in the network of underground tunnels beneath the square.

By the evening of June 3, Xin Ku had been without sleep for three days. Tempers were fraying. "In the days before June 4," Xin Ku remembered, "I had had a fight with one of my secretaries. The night of June 3 was the last time I saw her. She was directing a group that had decided to stay no matter what. They were singing a very beautiful song. I walked over to her and took off my cap and put it on her head. 'We all know this is the last time we will see each other,' she said to me. 'It may be that we will all die here.' I walked away. I was very busy."

The "end of history" is nowhere in sight, and the hundred flowers blooming today in Moscow are likely to be paved over with the gravestones of tomorrow's Tiananmen.

In the predawn hours of the morning of June 4, the firing began and the tanks rolled in, cutting down the outer ranks of the students. Screams and gunfire filled the night. "With my own eyes I saw my fellow students shot by the troops on Tiananmen Square," Xin Ku said, his voice faltering. "The troops were coming in from the avenues and up from underground passages. One of my assistants was shot in his left shoulder, another was shot in the hand. The troops also used chemical weapons on us, and there is evidence that the soldiers used dum-dum bullets, which explode inside human bodies."

"It was clear that the troops would soon surround us completely. The leadership called out to the students from the steps of the Martyrs' Monument: 'What do we do?! Do we stay or do we escape?!' The students cried out their opinion: 'We stay!' . . . So we stayed. . . . You see, the students were prepared to sacrifice their lives to resist the violent repression. They were prepared to use their blood to wipe clear the eyes of the people."

"I witnessed many heroic deeds that night and in the days before. The world knows the image of the 19-year-old student named Wang Weilin, who earlier stopped the tanks by standing in front of them. He demonstrated the selfless spirit of many students at that time. Wang is alive, jailed for life for violating martial law. Others did not live. I saw a student with two Molotov cocktails strapped to his waist. On the night of June 3, in a skirmish with the military, as a protest against the repressive activities of the government, he set himself on fire." Xin Ku's eyes

filled with tears. "The act of this student symbolized the willingness of all students to give their lives for freedom and democracy."

Hundreds, perhaps thousands, died that night before the guns of the People's Army. We will never know exactly how many were killed. "The soldiers surrounded us," Xin Ku said. "Our first command post was destroyed and so we withdrew with the leadership to one side of the Martyrs' Monument. As they fought toward us with clubs and guns, the soldiers kept open one corridor out of the square and some students took the opportunity to escape. Then that corridor was closed off. The students overturned one of the tanks and opened an escape route. The

leadership stayed until the last moment. A unit of about twenty soldiers was fighting toward us through the crowd. When they were about nine meters away from us, we finally decided to pull out. We formed a withdrawal line and tried to get everyone out by way of that corridor. The tanks cut our withdrawal line and rolled over the students. All the students who were encircled by the tanks and could not flee were killed. . . . As we withdrew to the outer streets, tanks and helicopters chased us for two hours. One tank rolled over thirteen students from behind." The occupation of Tiananmen Square was over.

On the afternoon of June 4, with gunfire flaring all over the city and Tiananmen a battlefield of crushed and bloody corpses, the leadership came together for a final meeting. "We resolved to carry on the struggle for the long term," Xin Ku said, "to go throughout China to spread the message of our goals, to tell the truth about what happened on Tiananmen Square. We tried to organize a secret press conference for the foreign journalists, but the tight situation prevented this. Soon after, I lost contact with some of the leaders. Later in June, we lost contact with our finances division. We had no money, our organization was in disarray. We decided to come out of China to seek support for our cause. About my escape I can say nothing, because these channels are still open."

Xin Ku says the fact of his escape proves "that secret channels still exist" to aid the Chinese resistance. "We need moral and material support for the tens of thousands now suffering hardships

because of their participation in the democracy movement." He believes the next stage in China's democratic revolution will come soon. "If Chinese society does not have the rule of law, has no democracy, no freedom, no human rights, then Chinese society cannot be a peaceful one. The reality is that after ten years of the Cultural Revolution, followed by ten years of openness, the people know what has transpired in the rest of the world. This knowledge, combined with inflation and the failure of economic constructions, is leading China into troubled times. In the next few years a very grave crisis will explode."

The people know what has transpired in the rest of the world. These are momentous times for many nations, with battles for an elusive thing called democracy—often just a notion of liberty, an idea of freedom—being fought from China to Chile to Poland and even in the Soviet Union itself. Yet the euphoria in many quarters over Mr. Gorbachev's turn toward reform ignores the long shadow of the Chinese experience: the democracy movement was brutally crushed, the good guys did not win. The "end of history" is nowhere in sight and the hundred flowers blooming today in Moscow are likely to be paved over with the gravestones of tomorrow's Tiananmen.

Still, it seems obvious that the people, particularly the young, will keep fighting. Exiles will continue to seek refuge on America's shores because they found inspiration in America's ideals. The inspired moments of Tiananmen, the heroic, even epic deeds—Homer could not have bettered Wang's confrontation with the tanks—now will have to warm Xin Ku and his allies in what probably will be a long exile in an America they'll find less than ideal.

Was it worth it? Perhaps it could be said there was a time when the students could have escaped with some small victories. Perhaps it could be said that clear-thinkers in Tiananmen should have recognized from the moment Gorbachev exited that Deng was going to butcher the young upstarts and teach them a lesson once and for all. But clear thinking is not a commodity of the revolutionary moment. And heroes are not sensible people—they take chances and are swept up in events, they rush in where angels fear to tread, they stand in front of tanks.

I asked Xin Ku if the leaders at Tiananmen had really believed that non-violent tactics would bring down the Chinese Communist party. He looked at me as if I were crazy. "Of course we did. We all did. We firmly believe that truth, kindness, and moral uprightness will vanquish evil." □

P. J. O'Rourke

THE NEW ENEMIES LIST: NO END IN SIGHT

A vigilant journalist's call for a New McCarthyism has struck a major chord with Americans of every patriotic stripe. Check below to see if you've been denounced.

Those of you who took President Bush's "kinder, gentler" suggestion too literally and, therefore, haven't been reading *TAS* may wonder what's going on here. Well, in the July issue (Vol. 22, No. 7) I proposed a "New McCarthyism" (of the Strike-A-Blow-For-Joe, not the Clean-For-Gene type). This would be fair recompense to the left, I thought, for their incessant use of the Mc-word to describe every conservative criticism of anybody.

At the end of my "Proscription for a Better America" I asked readers to send in the names of additional goats to scape. Send they did—postcards, letters, telegrams, and computer print-outs thick as a Democrat's skull. This despite the fact that *TAS* readers have jobs, marriages, intellects, and other things which keep them busier than, say, members of the Community for Creative Nonviolence. So many parlor pinks, bull-slingers, dweebs, wonks, bluestockings, nincompoops, hop-heads, muck spouts, hog callers, dopes, simps, chumps, wets, sob sisters, egg-suckers, and pencil-necked geeks were named that the Readers' List had to be divided into two parts. Last month we ran the first part, and this month we're running the second.

We now have a lovely file on the ideologically sinister, a fine, big matricula of scum. The only problem is, no one has come up with a fit suggestion for what to do with the people on it. We conservatives don't have gulags because they aren't tax deductible. You can't leverage gulag assets, and gulag merchandising rights are worth zilch. I mean, who wants a Leonid Brezhnev lunch box? Drug therapy isn't going to work on these folks. Most of the lefties already tried it on themselves in the sixties. And prefrontal lobotomies are out. How can doctors sever the nerves connecting the frontal lobes

with the thalamus when the entire brain is absent? Maybe we can crate up the nitwits and sell them in Eastern Europe. I hear they're running out of commies over there.

THE LIST CONTINUES

Anyway, as I noted last month, the Readers' Enemies List has been edited only to remove duplications, and the comments appearing in small Roman type are the readers' own although there is an occasional bracketed note from me when I thought somebody was calling in an air strike on his own position.

Paul J. Beck of Morocco, Indiana, begins the back nine play, teeing off on:

Studs Terkel
Andrea Dworkin
Joseph Campbell
Forrest Church
Sondra Gehr, local Chicago public radio host, a feminine Terkel
John Irving
Presidents of Dartmouth and Stanford
Maureen Reagan, who gives free-loading off a famous father a bad name
Mortimer Adler

Little Stevie
David Lange
The ACLU attorneys who tried to send Walter Polovchak to the gulag
That rheumy-eyed guy from Harvard who writes those weepy books about children. Whatsisname.
Richard Lamm: This man is scary.

Judith Evans Hanhisalo of Duxbury, Massachusetts, wants to add to the list:

Lawrence Walsh and his entire secret police organization
Judge Gerhard Gesell
Adm. Eugene La Rocque

But she wants to subtract from our previous list:

Paul Weyrich

Not until he buys John Tower a drink. William Rockwood of Canoga Park, California, reproaches:

Michael J. Fox and the entire cast of "Family Ties"
Rosanna Arquette
Marlon Brando
The makers of non-alcoholic wine

"I've tried," says Doug Rivers of Warner Robbins, Georgia, "to group my candidates for the New Enemies List by certain common characteristics to facilitate future classifica-

tion at re-education camps":

Alice Walker: All on the final list should be forced to read one of her novels cover to cover.

Mick and Bianca Jagger

Gregory Peck

The 'ol Cos, Tawana Brawley patron

Gene Upshaw

Right Reverend Sharpton

Attorneys Mason and Maddox

Presbyterians

Vegetarians

"Cagney and Lacey" scriptwriters

Presbyterians?

Kenneth M. Potter of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, indicts the following:

Paul Warnke

Sen. Patrick "Leaker" Leahy

"Preacher" Scotty Reston

Sammy Thompson III of Washington, D.C., writes on behalf of himself and his associates to say, "As junior staff peons at two neoconservative organizations, we join together to form the Mortals & Divine Society whose mission is to take every occasion to publicly and privately denounce and harangue those listed below":

Elizabeth Drew

Jane Pauley

Sojourners magazine

Jim Wallis

John Lofton

Tawana Brawley

The Other Side magazine

Bishop Barbara Harris

John Keker

Bishop John Shelby Spong

I. F. Stone, also on God's list

Gus Hall

Timothy Leary

Jim Hightower

Pat Sajak

Morton Downey, Jr.

John Nields

Arthur Liman

Gloria Allred

David Duke

Buz Lukens

The Kennedy Kids

Larry "Bud" Melman

Mayor Marion Barry

Leonard Nimoy

The Fairfax County "Family Life Education" program

People who use "dove" motifs

Dykes on Bikes

Eugene McCarthy

TransAfrica



P. J. O'Rourke is author, most recently, of *Modern Manners* (Atlantic Monthly Press).