

'China's people are looking for a spark'

by Mary McCourt Burdman

"The people of China are ready for something, they are looking for a spark," Lee Chuk Yan, a member of the Committee of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of the Patriotic Democratic Movement in China told *EIR* June 6. "The students in Beijing have taken actions, but right now control by the government and the military is so tight that there can be no full eruption. There will be sporadic movements, but people are ready for more. What has happened in the Soviet Union has had a big impact within the Chinese Communist Party. It is heavily divided."

Despite the fact that Beijing has been an armed camp for the week leading up to the June 3-4 anniversary of the Tiananmen massacre last year, 1,000 students at Beijing University—the cradle of last year's mass protests—held candle-light vigils and demonstrations late into the night for two nights running. The students sang protest songs, including the now-forbidden *Internationale*, and, even more important, smashed bottles, as they did in Tiananmen Square last year. In Chinese, the word for "little bottle" rhymes with "Deng Xiaoping." Students in Wuhan and Shanghai also smashed bottles. There have been other ironic allusions on China's campuses. Students have been hanging up posters of Mao Zedong which the authorities, of course, are powerless to forbid. Mao's heirs, the "Gang of Four," were swept from power by the Deng circle.

On June 4, all the official Chinese press proclaimed "Stability overrides everything," and praised the suppression of the "counterrevolutionary rebellion" last year. Police with submachine guns surrounded the university, and many Western reporters were attacked and beaten by police on the streets of Beijing. The students in Beijing were not alone: In Moscow, 20 Soviet students wearing white headbands and carrying candles held a protest in Red Square, until police took them away.

Huge demonstration in Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, the Alliance led a demonstration of 250,000 people on June 3, which astonished even the organizers, who had expected 30,000. Many thousands more lined the streets to support the marchers, who wore black and white, the Chinese color of mourning. The march converged on the office of Xinhua news agency, Beijing's unofficial but very powerful embassy in Hong Kong, where a few hundred

began a sit-in. The next day, 100,000 held a three-hour vigil in Victoria Park. The march defied not only Beijing, but also the British colonial government, which has been propitiating the People's Republic for 40 years. Before the anniversary, colonial Gov. Sir David Wilson called on the people of Hong Kong not to openly defy Beijing, and to "look to the future, and simply not look obsessively at the past."

Wilson's exhortations had little effect, however. "The shadow of China is very dark in Hong Kong now," Lee Chuk Yan said. "But the 250,000 marchers prove people have not forgotten. This was not naïve emotion—it is the very clear political perception that there is no hope for Hong Kong if China does not change. This is a movement to control our own fate in the future, with a multi-party democracy in China. The question is if China will have changed by 1997. As long as there is the one-man rule of Deng Xiaoping in China, change will have to wait, until his death or total collapse. But once he goes, the movement will erupt, to release the population from the grip of the CP [Communist Party]. The result of last year's massacre is that the democracy movement has no more illusions about the one-party system. All illusions about reform is gone, crushed by the suppression. There are already underground parties in China."

The upheavals in Eastern Europe and now in the Soviet Union are having a big effect inside China, Lee said. Most people may not know all that has happened, but the activists know the impact that China had on Eastern Europe last year. The 1989 revolutions "give direction to China for the future," he said. Even Chinese CP security chief Qiao Shi is worried. He told his Soviet counterpart Boris Pugo, in Beijing May 30, that he is "concerned about the situation in the Soviet Union. Qiao said he hopes the U.S.S.R. will solve its problems and advance along the socialist road."

In the wake of the Eastern European revolutions, in December the CP circulated a document stating: "After many years of not championing revolutionary change, we see that this task must be advocated anew. We must assure that the leadership positions at every level in the party across the country are firmly in the hands of those who are true to Marxism. This is going to be one of the greatest challenges faced by the party in the decade of the nineties," Hong Kong's *Cheng Ming Monthly* reported in February. "This question must be discussed every day, every month, every year. . . . Failing to deal with this problem can only lead to a great upheaval! One morning we may find that our heads are missing."

European press report that the next protest movement in China will come from the workers. Already there are work stoppages, because both managers and workers are unwilling to produce under the current conditions. In Hong Kong, reports abound that Chinese workers are not being paid either wages or bonuses, and when they are, they are paid in the company's product, which they then must try and sell to feed their families. The government is now printing money to

cover workers' paychecks, which means renewed inflation.

Democracy activists "believe that if the West maintains an economic boycott, the Chinese economy may collapse. Popular discontent could then force the disintegration of the Li Peng regime. They say: 'We would rather suffer hardship for the sake of China's future,' " an anonymous Beijing dissident wrote in an essay in the London *Guardian* May 31. "For some countries to give succor to the regime for their own economic advantage is immoral. . . . The West should not be fooled into thinking the Chinese economy is in good shape because a few areas seem prosperous or a few technological achievements have been reported. The reality is that the Chinese Communist Party is like a thin man who pummels his own face to make it look fat."

Economy grinds to a halt

Key industries, the dissident wrote, "which were facing a stoppage of production have received loans to keep them going. Mr. Li [Peng] cannot ignore the weaknesses of the planned economy." With prices of food, soap, and matches already rising steadily, "large increases in grain, oil, electricity and fuel are expected after the Asian games in September. The regime also plans to sell off housing into private hands then, so rents are being sharply increased."

After 20 months of murderous austerity, with production collapsed and the country strangling on its internal debt, Prime Minister Li Peng was forced in late May to allow China's banks to make 25 billion yuan (about \$6 billion) in loans to keep the bankrupt state sector operation. China's internal debt situation is so bad that industries cannot collect enough funds from their customers even to pay operating costs. Last year, the An Shan Steel company, China's biggest enterprise, unable to pay its work force, asked the workers to come up with the tens of millions of yuan to bail the company out, Hong Kong's *Perspective Monthly* reported March 18. Another company, the Fulaerji Heavy Machine Works in Heilongjiang province, the largest industrial machine-builder in Asia, was forced to shut down for a month in early 1989, because it could not buy essential materials. Just months later, the entire works, unable to collect anything, was threatened with final closure. The situation has changed little. At the beginning of April, the government took—by force—some 5 billion yuan out of workers' wages to pay for a new issue of government bonds.

Yet at the same time, the government has been bankrupting itself by subsidising the entire state-owned economy. In 1989, government subsidies were nearly double the figure from just four years before. Subsidies were 25% of national income in 1986, but reached 32.6% by 1989.

Even the People's Liberation Army, despite its key role in keeping the regime in power, is being hit hard. Military spending was boosted to almost 30 billion yuan in the projected 1990 budget, an over 15% increase. But the army will be lucky to get an additional 10 billion yuan.

Chai Ling: Don't forget the martyrs of Tiananmen Square

On June 3, Chai Ling, the 24-year-old former leader of China's Tiananmen Square student movement, addressed a commemorative rally in Washington, D.C. on the occasion of the first anniversary of the massacre. Chai Ling was in hiding in China for nearly a year after the massacre. She escaped to France in April. Her remarks are the first that she has publicly made in the United States. For many, Chai Ling has become a symbol of the Chinese struggle for freedom.

One year ago today, a few hours from now, the killing began in Tiananmen Square. The massacre ended the peaceful demonstration that had lasted for over 50 days. For 50 days, we peacefully presented our government with our hopes and dreams for China. The government responded with martial law, tear gas, bullets, and tanks.

The major theme of the democracy movement last year was peace. The highest principle of peace is sacrifice. The people in China, indeed all over the world, were inspired by our belief in peace, and our willingness to sacrifice for peace.

During the hunger strikes, all of Beijing was full of the human spirit of peace and love which had never been felt in the 40-year history of Communist China. That history had been dominated by hatred and class struggle.

One year ago, when the tanks came into Tiananmen Square, the students were simply sitting there, facing the tanks peacefully. Outside the square, thousands of people blocked the tanks with their bodies. Their weapons were not guns, but human dignity. But that is the most powerful weapon that people can have. That night, it took four to five hours for the tanks to move 100 meters forward.

Wang Weilin, the 19-year-old student, blocked the tanks on Changan Boulevard with his love, the love for the lives of the peaceful demonstrators in Tiananmen Square. That scene was captured by the photographers, and made known to the world.

There was also a scene that wasn't so well known. A young woman, a student from a university in Beijing, also tried to block the tanks from going into Tiananmen Square. She put one hand on her waist, and the other hand up in a stop sign in front of the tanks. But for her, the tanks did not stop. She was crushed. Her young blood forever is a stain on