

Confession, Redemption, and Death: Liu Xiaobo and the Protest Movement of 1989

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There should be room for my extremism; I certainly don't demand of others that they be like me...

I'm pessimistic about mankind in general, but my pessimism does not allow for escape. Even though I might be faced with nothing but a series of tragedies, I will still struggle, still show my opposition. This is why I like Nietzsche and dislike Schopenhauer.

Liu Xiaobo, November 1988²

I

FROM 1988 to early 1989, it was a common sentiment in Beijing that China was in crisis. Economic reform was faltering due to the lack of a coherent program of change or a unified approach to reforms among Chinese leaders and ambitious plans to free prices resulted in widespread panic over inflation; the question of political succession to Deng Xiaoping had taken alarming precedence once more as it became clear that Zhao Ziyang was under attack; nepotism was rife within the Party and corporate economy; egregious corruption and inflation added to dissatisfaction with educational policies and the feeling of hopelessness among intellectuals and university students who had profited little from the reforms; and the general state of cultural malaise and social ills combined to create a sense of impending doom. On top of this, the government seemed unwilling or incapable of attempting to find any new solutions to these problems. It enlisted once more the aid of propaganda, empty slogans, and rhetoric to stave off the mounting crisis.

University students in Beijing appeared to be particularly heavy casualties of the general malaise. In April, Li Shuxian, the astrophysicist Fang Lizhi's wife and a lecturer in physics at Beijing University, commented that students had become apathetic, incapable of political activism. They consisted of two types of people: the mahjong players (*mapai*) and the TOEFL candidates (*tuopai*).³ Thus it came as something of a surprise to the citizens of Beijing — even those who were to participate — when the student demonstrations at the time of Hu Yaobang's death blossomed into a popular protest movement at the end of April.

While the motivations of the students in 1989 are too complex to discuss here, they do reflect a dimension of the thinking of one unique figure of the movement, Liu Xiaobo; a man who has been one of the central targets of official denunciations since his arrest in early June. Liu's career as a renegade critic and cultural nihilist mark him as an unlikely activist in the protests, yet his involvement and the statements he made both before and during the movement reveal an aspect of the protests that may help explain the extraordinary popular energy and enthusiasm that they inspired. Even after the massacre,

Liu's suicidal decision not to leave Beijing and in fact to court disaster by traveling around the city openly on a bike, echo the tragedy of individualistic and heroic Chinese intellectuals of the last century: to travel a course from self-liberation to self-immolation.⁴

II

I'm not famous, but that makes me more clever than any of the famous names. For fame brings with it constant uncertainty. The Chinese love to look up to the famous thereby saving themselves the trouble of thinking; that's why the Chinese rush into things en masse. Occasionally someone stands out from the crowd and lets out a shout: Everyone is astounded. What I'm saying is that there are too few people with their own minds, their own ideas.

Liu Xiaobo, September 1986⁵

In December 1986, as students in Hefei and then other Chinese cities began a series of demonstrations under the rubric 'democracy and freedom,' the Beijing-based literary critic Liu Xiaobo commented:

I can sum up what's wrong with Chinese writers in one sentence: They can't create themselves, they simply don't have the ability, because their very lives don't belong to them. So when young people go off to get involved in politics and all that rubbish, taking part in demonstrations, I see it as something completely superficial. In my opinion, true liberation for the Chinese will only come when people learn to live for themselves, when they realize that life is what you make of it. They should establish this type of a credo: 'Everything I am is of my own doing. If I become famous, that is due to my own efforts; if I'm a failure it's my own fault.'⁶

Although dismissive of the 1986 student demonstrations and the lack of self-awareness that he felt they revealed, Liu not only supported but eventually joined the demonstrators in May 1989.⁷ This change in attitude and his activities during the protest movement have placed Liu in the center of the post-massacre purge of Chinese intellectuals. Yet Liu is markedly different from the other intellectuals denounced in the Party press since June. Figures such as the political scientist Yan Jiaqi are establishment intellectuals, reluctant dissidents spurned by a political order that has given in to Stalin-Mao recidivism. Fang Lizhi and Li Shuxian are respected scientists and outspoken political dissidents. Dai Qing, the journalist-cum-historian, was a central figure in the rebellion of China's media workers in May although she strenuously cautioned against the occupation of Tiananmen Square. But Liu Xiaobo has been a loner, and although popular enough with audiences of university students who flocked to hear his lectures, he has never been an accepted or even welcome figure in the Chinese intellectual establishment.

Born in Changchun in the northeast of China in 1955, Liu spent his youth in Changchun with a three-year stint from 1970-73 in Inner Mongolia with his rusticated father. After middle school he spent two years as an 'educated youth' outside Changchun and then a year as a wall-painter for the Changchun Construction Company in 1976-77. Liu said later that he was extremely grateful to the Cultural Revolution because it gave him the freedom to do whatever he pleased; it allowed 'a temporary emancipation from the

educational process,' one he declares was then and is today solely concerned with the 'enslavement' of the individual. Secondly, as the only books he had access to were the works of Marx, by reading these — he claims to have read the 40-volume complete works — he was led to study the major Western philosophers.⁸ Liu graduated from the Chinese Department of Jilin University in 1982, after which he undertook postgraduate studies at the Beijing Normal University where he also taught. He was awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in July 1988.⁹ A prolific writer throughout his postgraduate career, Liu's writings have covered traditional Chinese philosophy and literature, modern and contemporary Chinese literature, and Western philosophy and literature. In late 1988, while traveling overseas, he also wrote a series of articles on politics.

Liu first achieved notoriety in China in September 1986, when he made a devastating critique of post-Cultural Revolution literature during a conference on the subject sponsored by the Literature Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Liu's speech, 'Crisis! The Literature of the New Age is Facing Crisis,' was printed shortly afterward in the *Shenzhen Youth Daily*, a controversial newspaper subsequently closed down in the anti-bourgeois liberalization movement of 1987.¹⁰

In 'Crisis!' Liu passed a series of scathing judgements on virtually every aspect of post-Cultural Revolution literature. He reserved his most acerbic comments for the atavistic 'roots' literature that had been in vogue among both up-market authors and readers since 1984. He saw this literary trend as a dangerous and reactionary retreat into traditionalism.¹¹ He traced the progress of contemporary Chinese writing

from the nostalgia for the 1950s and affirmation of the early years of Liberation, back further to a longing for the period of the Democratic Revolution (1930s and 1940s), moving gradually from that towards a renewed affirmation of the educated youth in the countryside and those undergoing labor reform. Finally, one arrives at a celebration of traditional classical culture and a return to it.

Liu's speech, a defiant affront to the new godfathers of Chinese literary theory such as Liu Zaifu, while affirming the value of some writers, in particular the 'misty' poets of the late 1970s and a few novelists, managed to sour what had been a cheery gathering exuding an ambience of self-congratulation. Whereas the other participants, mostly the middle-aged authorities who had risen to power since the 1970s, were there to celebrate a new age, Liu Xiaobo and other younger members of the audience wanted to hold a wake for China's stillborn post-Mao culture.

Xu Jingya, the arts editor of *Shenzhen Youth Daily*, added a foreword to the speech pointing out Liu's strengths as a critic. 'To be able to maintain an overall attitude of calm in the laudatory critical atmosphere which exists in the literary world, to have an aggressive, questioning, and challenging approach is all too rare among our critics.' But Liu's unexpected appearance — he was dubbed a 'black horse' (*heima*) — unsettled establishment figures ranging from the most orthodox to the outspoken 'reformers,' the Marxist revisionists or humanists. His personal manner, a gruffness accentuated by a bad stutter, rudeness — he swears freely in his coarse northeastern accent — and his pitiless honesty, not to mention his wildly heterodox views, quickly set him apart from the

coteries of Beijing critics and their favored writers. Among his detractors was Wang Meng, the Party novelist who had been appointed Minister of Culture in early 1986. Wang disguised his disquiet in the face of Liu's blistering and perceptive attacks by dismissing him as a mere transient figure; he predicted Liu would fade from the scene as quickly as he had appeared.¹²

Liu Xiaobo reveled in his isolation. After a long period in 1987, the year of the ouster of Hu Yaobang and the purge of 'bourgeois liberalization,' during which he was unable to publish, Liu wrote both a book-length philosophical treatise¹³ and an update of his famous 'Crisis!' which appeared in the first issue of *Baijia*, literally 'One Hundred Schools,' a literary bimonthly first published in early 1988.¹⁴ The second issue of the magazine carried another essay by Liu entitled 'On Solitude.' Both articles appeared in a section of the journal provocatively named 'the 101st school,' indicating that the opinions expressed therein were beyond even the range of the '100 contending schools' permitted by Party cultural policy. In what certainly appears to be a mood of self-indulgence, Liu wrote that intellectuals are

the wisdom of the age, the soul of a nation, the fortune-tellers of the human race. Their most important, indeed their sole destiny...is to enunciate thoughts that are ahead of their time. The vision of the intellectual must stretch beyond the range of accepted ideas and concepts of order; he must be adventurous, a lonely forerunner; only after he has moved on far ahead do others discover his worth...he can discern the portents of disaster at a time of prosperity, and in his self-confidence experience the approaching obliteration.¹⁵

It is a statement of Nietzschean fulsomeness; it is also one with piquant resonance in light of Liu's fate in 1989.¹⁶

In August 1988, Liu accepted an invitation to travel to Norway where he gave a series of lectures at the University of Oslo and attended an academic conference. Although delighted to have a chance to leave China, he said he found the conference on modern Chinese film and theatre 'agonizingly boring.' His sense of isolation, he commented in a letter to the writer, was little different from that he had experienced in China.¹⁷ His observation of discussions of China's problems in both Norway and the United States may be seen as having played an important role in his eventual decision to return to China and participate in the protest movement. The sojourn in Norway was also important in that it gave him time to consider the direction of his own writing, and after leaving China he embarked on writing a series of highly political articles markedly different from his earlier work.¹⁸

He commented that the lectures he gave at the University of Oslo were criticized for shoddy scholarship, and personality clashes with his hosts seem to have made his stay something of a trial for all parties. Indeed, in terms of his scholastic and analytical work, I believe Liu can be easily faulted. His contact with Sinologists in both China and overseas led to scathingly critical comments on Sinology in general, although his remarks on the subject to a Hong Kong journalist in late 1988 would indicate that he had little understanding of contemporary Western Sinology.¹⁹ In fact, Liu's 'nihilistic' style was generally characterized by out-of-hand and dismissive responses, something, as we will

see below, quite unlike the measured and positive stance he takes during the protest movement in Beijing.

Liu's extreme and outspoken attitudes had made him generally unpopular with his peers on the Mainland. Notorious in Beijing as an abrasive and even ill-mannered figure, Liu was found intolerable by some people more used to less brusque (although not less demanding) cultural figures. In Beijing, his coarse, stuttering harangues during academic meetings, public lectures or even at sedate dinner parties in which he would assault every aspect of conventional wisdom left few people, either Chinese or foreign, kindly disposed to the fiery critic. His indelicate style was a shock to Sinologists more used to the superficially respectful and cooperative intelligentsia of China. In fact, he enjoyed baiting foreign scholars by making blanket condemnations of Sinology — having made little attempt to study their work.

It is this stance as the 'angry young man,' a bohemian and his anti-social truculence that made him so popular with audiences of Chinese university students since 1986. Honesty, clear-headedness and humor were also the trademarks of Fang Lizhi at the height of his public career. Even before he left China, Liu was both aware and highly critical of the peculiar relationship between the foreign 'discoverers' (be they Sinologists, diplomats, reporters, or teachers) in Beijing and their Chinese 'cultural pets,' and one of the last articles he wrote overseas is devoted to the subject.²⁰ Without going into the details of the bitter criticisms made of Liu, it is important to keep in mind that he delighted in being painfully frank (and opinionated), about both others and himself, and his unrestrained personality is crucially important in our considerations of his role in the protest movement and his fate after the massacre.

After three months in Norway, Liu was invited to America for an extended period where he first visited the East-West Center of the University of Hawai'i. There he luxuriated in the climate and wrote furiously, producing an impressive series of articles for the Hong Kong press. 'I even surprise myself,' he wrote, 'I'm writing at an almost terrifying rate; sometimes I get scared that it's all a shoddy mess.'²¹ Of the essays he produced one is some 60,000 characters in length; entitled 'Contemporary Chinese Intellectuals and Politics,' which was subsequently serialized in *Cheng Ming*,²² and an opus on traditional Chinese culture for *Ming Pao Monthly*, as well as a number of shorter works for *Emancipation Monthly*, including 'Two Types of Marxism,' and the essay/introduction 'At the Gateway to Hell,' a powerful manifesto of political rebellion.²³ Liu was not the only one surprised by his productivity during these months. The denunciation published of him in the Beijing press on June 24, shortly after his arrest, said that his articles were 'a series of anti-communist, anti-people so-called "high-tonnage bombs."²⁴

In March he moved to New York, where he was sponsored as a visiting scholar by Columbia University. He was also active in organizing a petition in support of Fang Lizhi's January call for the Chinese government to release Wei Jingsheng and other political prisoners. While on the East Coast he lectured and among other things organized a seminar that carried the title 'Modern Chinese Intellectuals and Self-reflection.'²⁵ The theme of self-reflection is an important one in Liu's writings, and it was central to his

activities in the protest movement. He was also invited to participate in the China Symposium '89 organized by Orville Schell, Liu Baifang, and Hong Huang held in Bolinas, California, in late April 1989. The conference hosted a number of China's most controversial intellectual figures, including Wang Ruoshi, Bo Yang, Liu Binyan, Chen Ying-chen, and Wu Zuguang, although a number of those invited from the mainland, such as Fang Lizhi, Yan Jiaqi, and Su Xiaokang, failed to get permission to leave China. It is reported that other participants already in America, Liu Binyan and his friend the political commentator Ruan Ming, balked at the thought of having to suffer Liu Xiaobo's volatile presence on the West Coast. [For details of the final gathering, and an edited transcript of the proceedings, see www.tsquare.tv] Liu Binyan in particular had been the subject of some of Liu's scathing remarks only a few months earlier. The two suggested that Liu Xiaobo's connections in America be 'investigated' (*diao cha*) before he be allowed to attend. It would appear that they wanted to use Liu Xiaobo's friendship with Hu Ping, head of the Chinese Democratic Alliance, and Chen Jun, an activist recently expelled from China, as an excuse to bar him from the conference. It is noteworthy that Liu Xiaobo's Beijing persecutors later jumped on this connection with Hu and Chen as proof of Liu's 'counterrevolutionary' intent.²⁶ Another aspect of Liu Xiaobo's activities in America could not have failed to disturb Liu Binyan: He was planning a seminar to discuss Liu Binyan in June.²⁷ On the eve of the Bolinas conference, however, as the demonstrations in Beijing continued, Liu Xiaobo returned to China.

The socialite poet Huang Belling, a recent exile from the Beijing salons and new-found friend of Liu Xiaobo, claims that Liu returned to China at the request of his thesis adviser who had written to say he had arranged a series of classes for him. Liu returned, Huang says, out of respect for this teacher.²⁸ Yet the official denunciation of Liu declares that his teachers received a letter from him in early May stating that he would not return until 1990.²⁹

Liu certainly was frustrated by the empty talk of Chinese emigrés in America and inspired by the student protests. Chen Jun also talks of the moral pressure Liu had felt at work on him following the burgeoning of the student demonstrations.³⁰ While other Chinese intellectuals pontificated on the origins, significance and direction of the student movement from the Olympian heights of the West, Liu had the courage of his convictions. Chen quotes Liu as saying: 'Either you go back and take part in the student movement; otherwise you should stop talking about it.'³¹ He was critical of Fang Lizhi's reluctance to participate so the movement could maintain its 'purity.' Liu felt it was important for people who had been part of the democracy movement in China in the past or those who had studied it now to come out and direct it. The question of moral pressure is a very important one, and not only in the case of Liu Xiaobo. If the 1989 protest movement as a whole had as one of its motivating forces the deep-seated Chinese desire for moral (and by implication responsible) leadership — something that was momentarily embodied in the person of Hu Yaobang — then the moral energy released first by the students flouting the April 26 *People's Daily* editorial and then engaging in a mass hunger strike in mid-May tapped the most powerful well-springs of political protest in the Chinese mind.

But there was another, more personal level to Liu's desire to return to China. Caught up for years in the intellectual debates of the country, Liu was an important figure in China. In America, he was a nobody. He had a heroic view of himself as quite different from most Chinese intellectuals. His personal philosophy of uniting words with actions, his short but successful career as a controversial figure in China, and the feeling of impotence at being caught in America at such a historic juncture, made involvement a heady lure. This sentiment is encapsulated in a comment he made when pacing the streets of New York with Huang Beiling. 'In China you can't even fart without someone noticing; in America your loudest calls are lost among the innumerable sounds made by others.'³² Having watched the protests on television, Huang quotes Liu's rather patriotic and sentimental statements on his reasons for returning. Of this, one line in particular rings true: 'Haven't we been preparing for this moment all of our lives?' Liu Xiaobo admired both Rousseau and Nietzsche for their personal courage, their daring, and freedom. 'For them to choose freedom,' he wrote, 'was to choose suffering and danger.'³³

III

By making a decision to go back [to China in April] Liu Xiaobo was little better than a moth being drawn to a flame.

Liu Binyan, June 1989³⁴

Former CCP General Secretary Hu Yaobang's death on 15 April 1989 sparked the student protest movement. The students — many of whom had been used in the purge of Hu in 1987 — mourned the dead man as 'the soul of China' (*Zhongguohun*). The panegyrics for Hu authored by both intellectuals and students who had had little respect for him during his life disgusted Liu Xiaobo. He wrote a powerful critique of the reaction of China's intellectual elite to Hu's passing entitled 'The Tragedy of a Tragic Hero' shortly before leaving America.³⁵ It provides a number of clues as to why he decided to take part in the protest movement and offers a hint of the role he envisaged for himself.

In the first place, he was dismayed by the 'hysterical response' to Hu's death.³⁶ Suddenly, Hu Yaobang had gained the status of a tragic hero; the mourning for him seemed to be a replay of the events of April 1976 when Zhou Enlai was the focus of popular adulation. 'Why,' he asks, 'do the Chinese constantly re-enact the same tragedy (one starting with Qu Yuan's drowning in the Miluo River)?'³⁷ Why do the Chinese mourn as tragic heroes people like Zhou Enlai, Peng Dehuai, and Hu Yaobang, while they forget such tragic figures as Wei Jingsheng?'³⁸

He was particularly critical of the people — both students and even Fang Lizhi who produced an enthusiastic epitaph for Hu Yaobang³⁹ — who now praised Hu whereas in the past they had treated him as either a buffoon or a Party fall guy. For all of his virtues, Hu accepted his demotion with impotent grace — and was lackluster in comparison to Boris Yeltsin, the outspoken ex-mayor of Moscow.⁴⁰ Liu argues that Hu was both the

product and victim of Party authoritarianism, while Wei Jingsheng, Xu Wenli and the other victims of the 1979 purge of Democracy Wall activists were true democratic reformers. He castigates Liu Binyan, Wang Ruoshui, and Ruan Ming who by paying their condolences to Hu's family were responding like loyal feudal ministers to the passing of their liege. 'How many of China's intellectuals have ever thought of asking after Wei Jingsheng's family as he sits rotting in jail?'⁴¹ While he recognizes the nature of the relationship between Hu Yaobang and China's intellectuals he says it is time to abandon their faith in enlightened reformers within the Party elite; or at least they should support the democratic activists in China (such as Wei and Xu) and overseas (China Spring) at the same time as backing Party reformers.⁴² While not rejecting the Party outright, he was calling for independent popular political action to oppose Party fiat.

In this article Liu combines his stance on the independent intellectual with an awareness that positive group action can act as a catalyst to democratic reform within China. He had formulated general principles for democratic agitation, which he pursued throughout the movement and dismissed what he saw as the dangerous emotionalism of many intellectuals:

Rationality and order, calmness and moderation must be the rules of our struggle for democracy; hatred must be avoided at all costs. Popular resentment towards authoritarianism in China can never lead us to wisdom, only to an identical form of blind ignorance, for hatred corrupts wisdom. If our strategy in the struggle for democracy is to act like slaves rebelling against their master, assuming for ourselves a position of inequality, then we might as well give up right here and now. Yet that's what the majority of enlightened Chinese intellectuals are doing at this moment.⁴³

This principle of rational and democratic process was something he, along with others, repeatedly tried to have implemented by the student leaders on Tiananmen Square. It was central to his 'Six-Point Program for Democracy' devised in the first days after the announcement of martial law, published on May 23 in the name of the Independent Student Union of Beijing Normal University as 'Our Suggestions.'⁴⁴ It was seen as a central element of the next stage of the movement, both by Liu and his critics. The program called for the recognition and inclusion of the workers and peasants in a Solidarity-like campaign. It contained the central elements of Liu's approach to the question of 'civil consciousness' in China. Both he and Hou Dejian, the Taiwan-born songwriter who found himself caught up in the protests in late May, were lobbying with the students to get them to hold citywide democratic elections for their organizations, thereby showing in a practical way how democracy worked and could be implemented, first among students and then in independent workers' unions. Hou, who later said he took part in Liu's hunger strike out of sympathy for his friend, spoke of this as being an educational process from which both the students and the electorate, as well as non-student observers, could learn a great deal. This emphasis on process became the core of the 'Hunger Strike Proclamation' of June 2 signed by Liu, Hou, Gao Xin, and Zhou Duo.

Back in China, Liu spent a considerable amount of time with the demonstrators. Students from his own school, Beijing Normal University, were central to the action. A welcome figure, he was known to many Beijing students for his outspokenness in public lectures. Still relatively young — he turned 34 at the end of 1989 — and a recent graduate, Liu

mixed with the students easily. In this he was like Lao Mu, the poet who became head of the student propaganda department in Tiananmen, and Wang Juntao and Chen Ziming, activists in both the 1976 Tiananmen incident and the 1978 — 79 Democracy Wall movement, who were also in their 30s. They were unlike the majority of other ‘elite intellectuals’ (*gaoji zhishifenzi*) whose self-image as mentors and philosophers generally led them to remain aloof and timorous.

At first, Liu Xiaobo was particularly interested in evaluating the level of popular support for the student movement, and up to the time of the hunger strike in mid-May, he was part of a group that devised a series of questionnaires to gauge public opinion on the events of April and early May. The series found many of those questioned supporting the students’ main slogans, which attacked nepotism, corruption, and the lack of democracy.⁴⁵ In early May many other writers and intellectuals in the capital were hesitant about taking any direct or public action. Emboldened by the implicit support Zhao Ziyang gave the demonstrators in his speeches of early May, a group of writers did organize their own protest in a comic emulation of the students. Many of the demonstrators were young participants in the Peking University Lu Xun writers’ program, and not wishing to be confused with mere university students, many of the participants put on sashes like competitors in a beauty pageant on which were written their names and the titles of their most famous works. Thus Ke Yunlu appeared with the words ‘New Star’ on his sash, Lao Gui sported ‘Bloody Sunset,’ and Zheng Yi advertised ‘Old Well.’ The Beijing ‘entrepreneur novelist’ Wang Shuo declined this form of self-promotion; however, he tagged along and later regaled friends with details of his fellow writers’ pretensions.

Despite his enthusiastic involvement in the protest movement, Liu, a keen observer of human frailties and foibles, maintained a sardonic view of the students. As with his literary criticism, he chose to view things differently from the general opinion, especially that of other writers and critics. He did not get caught up in the excessive rhetoric of Yan Jiaqi and the other authors of the May 17 proclamation, which was a strident denunciation of Deng Xiaoping, ‘the befuddled autocrat’ à la the Dowager Cixi. Instead, on that same day, he wrote his own appeal to overseas Chinese and concerned foreigners calling for donations to the student cause and support for the students’ demands for the government to withdraw the April 26 *People’s Daily* editorial and to engage in ‘open, direct, independent, and sincere dialogue’ with the students. It avoided the emotive rhetoric of other intellectuals’ public petitions (such as the May 16 and May 17 proclamations). He signed the appeal on Tiananmen Square and left his home telephone number for anyone wishing to contact him.⁴⁶

Many of his own students, or students who had previously listened to his blistering lectures on literature, culture, and philosophy, were involved in the hunger strike that began on the afternoon of May 13. It was the hunger strike, stage-managed by a number of young Beijing intellectuals who were advising the students such as Wang Juntao and Chen Ziming,⁴⁷ that changed the nature of the movement and galvanized both the city of Beijing and then many other urban centers. Liu spent most of the hunger strike week (Saturday, May 13, to Friday, May 19) on the Square helping with the logistics of giving

the strikers adequate medical help and seeing to their other needs (including fulfilling their request for the purchase of condoms). He also became Wuerkaixi's adviser. As one denunciation notes, quoting another student leader from Beijing Normal University: 'Wuerkaixi is our leader in practical matters, but Liu Xiaobo is our ideological leader.'⁴⁸ This statement does, of course, obscure the role of Wang Juntao, et al., of the Beijing Research Institute for Social and Economic Science, claimed by one writer to be the sole truly civilian organization in the capital.⁴⁹

I have known Liu Xiaobo since late 1986, and we met a number of times during my stay in Beijing from May 7-27. The first occasion was on the evening of May 8 with Hou Dejian and after a long talk we all went in Hou's red Mercedes to a small Mongolian hot-pot restaurant in Hufangqiao for a late meal which continued until after 2 a.m. Again, during the hunger strike, he came to where I was staying, talked, had a wash, and asked for a change of clothing — he had been in the same clothes for five days. After martial law was declared on May 20, we met again a number of times, to talk, eat, and so that he and his friends could have a shower.

Our last meeting was on the morning of May 27, when Liu introduced me to Wuerkaixi (a.k.a. Wu Kaixi and Uerkesh Daolet). On May 23, a few days after the declaration of martial law, Liu had told me about Wuerkaixi's call to the students on the Square to retreat. He claimed Deng Pufang, Deng Xiaoping's son, had sent news to him that tanks would be used to crush the student movement. Late on May 22, Wuerkaixi had made a statement through the student broadcasting system on the Square, 'This is Wuerkaixi; this is Wuerkaixi, I now issue the following order... .' Liu imitated the opening statement many times for his friends' amusement, commenting that Wuerkaixi spoke just like some self-important bureaucrat. Ironically, it was this same element of brash charisma that led Liu and others to believe Wuerkaixi could be a true leader, one who would benefit from his direction and advice. This final meeting took place in a taxi which traveled from the Palace Hotel in the center of Beijing, out to Beijing Normal University to pick up Wuerkaixi, then back to the Academy of Social Sciences at Jianguomen. At one point, as we approached Jianguomen, Wuerkaixi turned to Liu and said in what was now a familiar imperious tone: 'Eh, Xiaobo, hear you've also written some books. Maybe when this is all over you can give me a few and I'll take a crack at them!' Liu, preoccupied with more weighty matters, grunted his consent.⁵⁰

In private, Liu constantly bewailed the fact that the students were, as he had said elsewhere, 'strong on sloganizing and weak on practical process.'⁵¹ He found the constant power struggles and the corruption involving public donations on the Square depressing.⁵² And even at the height of his own involvement, Liu watched out for the elements of farce which he hoped to write about one day. Despite his often bemused observations of the students, the power of the hunger strike in bringing the citizens of Beijing into the streets in support of the protests signified to Liu Xiaobo an important change in the nature of political protest in China; he felt a new opportunity for civil protest was now possible and he was anxious it should not be squandered.

Fang Lizhi had talked of this earlier in the year in his essay 'China's Despair and China's Hope,' where he noted that lobby groups had begun to appear in 1988. Fang also spoke of the extremely negative public reaction to the Party's attempt to 'trace the rumor that top leaders and their children hold foreign bank accounts' late in the year. People were outraged that the government wanted to penalize individuals for bringing this question to light and it was no coincidence that the slogan 'Overthrow official speculators!' (*dadao guandao!*) was the clarion call of the 1989 protest movement. There was an increased desire for the citizens to be given the right to play a supervisory role in government.

It was during the hunger strike and the early days of martial law, in which the very vocabulary of public discourse changed, that revealed this new attitude. Intellectuals, students, and cadres have always followed the Party delineation of social hierarchy and referred to the 'comrade in the street' as either 'the masses' (*qunzhong*) or 'common people' (*laobaixing*). Now they were spoken of as 'the citizens' (*shimin*), and their role as a positive social force — they brought life in the capital to a standstill, created the unprecedented festive atmosphere of the hunger-strike week, and then closed the city to the People's Liberation Army for two weeks — rather than a lumpen mass requiring direction and leadership, was finally recognized. It is something that certainly caught Liu Xiaobo by surprise. 'Our Suggestions,' a work authored by Liu, expresses perhaps better than any other public document of the early weeks of martial law, the desire of some intellectual activists to turn the protest movement into a broadly based and organized civilian protest. Apart from calling for an end to martial law and an emergency session of the National People's Congress, the thrust of this tract is that organized autonomous groups should be elected by various sectors of the society to represent their interests and to take part in the democratic transformation of the society at every level. The students should analyze their movement, reorganize themselves on a rational and democratic basis, and the eight impotent political parties should push for real political power. Above all, the document emphasized rationality, democratic process, and the growth of civic consciousness (*gongmin yishi*).⁵³ Liu Xiaobo, a figure labeled in China as the evil champion of nihilism and the irrational was, ironically, now the chief advocate of positive and rational civil action. The enthusiasm he had felt as he witnessed the citizenry of Beijing take the protection of the students and the city into their own hands led him in late May to organize his own hunger strike as the student movement lost momentum and popular interest began to flag.

IV

All of China's tragedies are authored, directed, performed, and appreciated by the Chinese themselves. There's no need to blame anyone else.

Liu Xiaobo, November 1988⁵⁴

On 2 June 1989, what was to be the last group of hunger strikes set up camp in the student tent city at the foot of the Monument to the People's Heroes on Tiananmen Square. The group of four was led by Liu Xiaobo. The other three were Zhou Duo, formerly a lecturer in the Sociology Research Institute of Peking University, recently the

head of planning for the Stone Company, Hou Dejian, and Gao Xin, former editor of the weekly newspaper of Beijing Normal University and a member of the CCP.⁵⁵ Supposedly the first in a series of strikes by intellectuals which were to continue until the June 20 session of the National People's Congress, it was a somewhat feeble, although courageous attempt, to maintain the rage of earlier weeks. The comic aspect of the new strike is described by Michael Fathers and Andrew Higgins, correspondents for *The Independent*, in the following way:

On Friday June 2, they [the students] tried to recapture past magic with a second hunger strike. History repeated itself as farce. It attracted four people, three of whom were prepared to fast for just three days. The fourth, Hou Dejian, a popular songwriter who had defected from Taiwan, said he could go hungry for no more than two days. He would be cutting a new record in Hong Kong the following week, and could not risk his health.

The quartet began melodramatically on the terrace of the Monument [to the People's Heroes], unfurling a huge white banner bearing the words, 'No other way.' The political scientist, Yan Jiaqi, came to give encouragement. 'In the circumstances, there is nothing else we can do,' he said. Others felt differently. No crowds poured into the Square to support this strike. Even the Beijing Municipal Party Committee, not noted for its levity, thought it safe to scoff. It called the event a 'two-bit so-called hunger strike.'⁵⁶

The rubric of the Beijing government was repeated in subsequent denunciations of Liu,⁵⁷ and although the new strike had elements of farce in it, it bore the unmistakable mark of Liu Xiaobo and his perceptions of the movement. It also attracted greater attention than is credited by Fathers and Higgins.⁵⁸

Liu was highly critical of his fellow 'high-level intellectuals' as they dubbed themselves in the markedly non-egalitarian language of the Chinese hierarchy. They had, he observed, made appearances on the Square when it suited them, posing with students after marches, proffering intellectual guidance, play-acting at hunger striking themselves (but never really doing it, unlike Liu et al.), and running for cover when there was any hint of danger. Liu Xiaobo was, as ever, highly dismissive of their role in the preceding weeks. But when announcing this new hunger strike he reserved his main criticisms for the student movement. These are best summed up in the joint 'Hunger Strike Proclamation' signed by the four hunger strikers.⁵⁹ After commenting on the mistakes made by the government in dealing with the student movement, they went on to analyze the shortcomings of the students:

For their part the errors of the students have been evinced in the internal chaos of their organization, the general lack of efficiency, and democratic process. For example, although their aims are democratic, the means they have employed as well as the processes they have used are undemocratic; their [political] theory is democracy, but in dealing with concrete problems, they have been undemocratic. They lack a spirit of cooperation, their power groups are mutually destructive, which has resulted in the complete collapse of a decision-making process; there is an excess of attention to privilege and a serious lack of equality, etc. Over the last 100 years, most of the struggles for democracy in which the Chinese have been engaged have never got beyond ideology and sloganizing. There's always been a lot of talk about intellectual awakening, but no discussion of practical application; there has been a great deal of talk about ends but a neglect of means and processes. We are of the opinion that the true realization of political democracy requires the democratization of the process, means and structure [of politics]. For this reason we appeal to the Chinese to abandon the vacuous democracy of their traditional simplistic ideology,

sloganizing, and end-oriented approach and engage now in the democratization of the political process itself; to turn a democracy movement which has concentrated solely on intellectual awakening into a movement of practicality, to start with small and realistic matters. We appeal to the students to engage in self-reevaluation which will take as its core the reorganization of the student body on Tiananmen Square itself.⁶⁰

Liu Xiaobo was one of the only advocates of a practical application of democratic principles during those final weeks. Even in the early hours of June 4, as the PLA moved on the Square in force, Liu achieved a crucial last-minute implementation of his ideas. As Richard Nations, the correspondent for *The Spectator* who was on the Square at that time reports, in a speech aimed at persuading the remaining students to leave the Square with the minimum of bloodshed, Liu ‘turned the question of democracy from a test of courage in some fantasy world of moral absolutes into a practical problem in the immediate present.’⁶¹

The use of the expression ‘self-reevaluation’ (*ziwo fanxing*) in the hunger strikers’ proclamation is by no means new in mainland political rhetoric. Indeed it has been part of the currency of intellectual debate since the mid-1980s. However, in the context of this proclamation it is interesting that the call for students to review their own movement comes after an earlier and fascinating passage dealing with the question of national reevaluation, even of national repentance in the speech he made at the literary conference which demonstrators declare: ‘We are on a hunger strike! We protest! We appeal! We repent!’⁶²

They go on to say:

We search not for death, but for true life.

Under the violent military pressure of the irrational Li Peng government, Chinese intellectuals must bring an end to their millennia-old and weak-kneed tradition of only talking and never acting. We must engage in direct action to oppose martial law; through our actions we appeal for the birth of a new political culture; through our actions we repent the mistakes resulting from our long years of weakness. Every Chinese must share in the responsibility for the backwardness of the Chinese nation.⁶³

This passage echoes Liu Xiaobo’s comments to this writer in 1986. In his 1988 essay ‘On Solitude,’ he had also emphasized the need for Chinese intellectuals to ‘negate’ themselves, ‘for only in such a negation,’ he wrote, ‘will we find the key to the negation of traditional culture.’ While passing through Hong Kong in late November 1988, Liu repeated this attitude in a conversation with Jin Zhong, the editor of *Emancipation Monthly*. He said:

I’m quite opposed to the belief that China’s backwardness is the fault of a few egomaniac rulers. It is the doing of every Chinese. That’s because the system is the product of the people. All of China’s tragedies are authored, directed, performed, and appreciated by the Chinese themselves. There’s no need to blame anyone else. Anti-traditionalism and renewal must be undertaken by every individual, starting with themselves. I’m appalled by [philosopher] Li Zehou’s comment that we shouldn’t oppose tradition or otherwise we’ll negate ourselves. Following the fall of the Gang of Four, everyone has become a victim, or a hero who struggled against the Gang. Bullshit! What were they all doing in the Cultural Revolution? Those intellectuals produced the best big-

character posters of all. Without the right environment, Mao Zedong could never have done what he did.⁶⁴

By producing the June proclamation and undertaking a hunger strike at a critical time in the period of martial law, which had come into force two weeks earlier, Liu and his fellows were expressing on the one hand that they had been inspired by the actions of the students over the previous weeks and at the same time wishing to engage in an activity which would somehow expiate their own sense of guilt, to free them from the very elements of the intellectual tradition to which they were heir. Of course, knowing Liu and Hou fairly well, I cannot deny that they were also motivated to some extent by personal interest — something alluded to by Chai Ling, another student leader and the rival of Wuerkaixi — a desire to be in the limelight of the movement rather than merely basking in the reflected glory of the student leaders and media stars. Nor were they the first university teachers or ‘intellectuals’ to join in the fast. Hou was, however, the only member of the Beijing glitterati I know of who took such action. Huang Belling found a rather grand purpose in the hunger strike and concluded that: ‘Their action has become a symbol of the struggle for democracy of both Chinese intellectuals and those from the rest of the world; it washes away the record of humiliation and compromise of contemporary Chinese intellectuals.’⁶⁵

V

True belief is born of sincere and painful repentance.

Liu Xiaobo⁶⁶

The line in the hunger strike proclamation: ‘We are on a hunger strike! We protest! We appeal! We repent!’ was written up and hung as a banner above the strikers. The last exclamation ‘We repent!’ was a conscious attempt to add a new dimension to the protest movement, and there is little doubt that Liu Xiaobo was its author.

The concepts of freedom, responsibility, and repentance form a major element of Liu Xiaobo’s writings.⁶⁷ The importance of assuming responsibility for one’s own fate, and sharing in the responsibility for the state of both the society and the nation are among his central concerns. Equally important to his mind was the need for individuals to engage in acts of redemption so that they could affirm their own being. Both Liu and Zhu Dake, a controversial Shanghai critic and a good friend of Liu, had pinpointed the lack of God, of ultimate values, as being the tragic weakness of the Chinese tradition.⁶⁸ ‘I believe that man is at his most sincere and transparent when he is confessing or admitting that he has sinned. Then he is most vitally alive.’ The Chinese, on the other hand, are satisfied with this shore. They find fulfillment in the corporeal; there is no need for God and therefore no need for forgiveness or redemption.⁶⁹ In his major article written after Hu Yaobang’s death, Liu criticized Chinese intellectuals for their years of silence regarding the jailed democracy activists Wei Jingsheng and Xu Wenli. He also reflected on his own ignominious past:

Chinese intellectuals have hoped for too much from the government during the past dozen or so years of reform. They have too readily ignored the push for democracy among the people. The

cool indifference of everyone in China to Wei Jingsheng's sentencing in 1979 is proof of that attitude. (Here I include myself, for at the time I was just another one of the ignorant mob).⁷⁰

He characterized the petitions of January–March 1989 with the following words:

What is most required of Chinese intellectuals, in particular enlightened intellectuals, now is neither to mourn Hu Yaobang nor eulogize him, but rather to face up to the figures of the imprisoned Wei Jingsheng and Xu Wenli and to engage in a collective act of repentance. The petition movement, rather than being seen as an heroic undertaking, would best be understood as the first step towards such repentance.⁷¹

What was important was the desire to confess, to find redemption in acts that would negate the disinterested and lethargic attitude to the past, and through that action to find self-fulfillment. Liu had been critical of the 'Confucian personality,' the *Kongyan renga*, promoted by such contemporary philosophers as Li Zehou, and was equally dismissive of meaningless self-sacrifice such as that made by the Tang poet Sikong Tu, who starved himself to death out of loyalty to his lord.⁷² Equally, he felt that calls by Chinese intellectuals over the years to achieve freedom always had a plaintive tone about them. Like Fang Lizhi, he emphasized that freedom was a natural right and not something to be bestowed by the powerful. 'For so many years now,' he wrote, 'the Chinese have been on their knees [before an emperor] begging for freedom.'⁷³ He was thus highly critical of the students who had petitioned Premier Li Peng on April 22, the day of the state memorial service for Hu Yaobang, by kneeling on the steps of the Great Hall of the People. It was an example of what he had called 'the Chinese form of death — blind suicide.'⁷⁴ However, he saw the mid-May hunger strike of the students as denoting a departure from the mere moral dimension of pressuring the government, and not merely as a throwback to the traditional 'petitioning the throne through death' (*sijian*). Rather it was a form of personal action undertaken for the sake of social advancement and for the development of China's civil society. This is why he decided to emulate the strike in early June, hoping to encourage more intellectuals to pressure people into realizing their role and rights as citizens.

Liu Xiaobo's call for reflection and confession in the June 2 proclamation is not the only example of self-examination that appeared during the student movement. As early as late April a number of confessional-style writings had appeared in Beijing, for example, 'Confessions of a Vile Soul — by a Reborn Ugly Chinaman,' a pamphlet of Beijing Normal University dated late April, and 'The Confession of a Young Teacher — by a young teacher who knows shame.'⁷⁵ The authors of both of these essays admit to fear and opportunism at the time of the publication of the April 26 *People's Daily* editorial which called for the suppression of the student protests. The first of these was written as a pointed riposte to the Taiwan writer Bo Yang's controversial speech 'The Ugly Chinaman,' which had been widely reprinted in China in 1986.⁷⁶ Liu's fellow hunger striker Hou Dejian also countered Bo Yang's thesis in a song written on Tiananmen Square shortly before the massacre entitled 'The Beautiful Chinese.' The song contains such lines as 'Ugly Chinamen/How beautiful are we today,' and 'Everything can be changed/It is all up to us/Nothing is too distant/ Stand up and see/Everything is before us now.'⁷⁷

Liu was far from being the first mainland writer to talk about the need for repentance or confession in the post-Mao era. The veteran writer Ba Jin has made repentance a central theme of *Random Thoughts*, the collective name for his five volumes of essays/memoirs, and a number of other writers have touched on the need to repent for the dark days of the Cultural Revolution. The establishment literary critic Liu Zaifu, Liu Xiaobo's early nemesis and a comrade of Li Zehou, featured the question of repentance in the speech he made at the literary conference which catapulted Liu Xiaobo to fame in 1986. In his speech, Liu Zaifu made a lengthy analysis of post-1976 literature. Commenting on its limitations, he called for 'national repentance' in regard to the past.

Culturalistic self-reflection is, in the main, an autopsy of the body of the nation. It is a self-examination of the structure of the mass cultural psychology. The enhancing of this kind of self-examination requires the active participation of each and every individual in the nation, and from that participation as soon as each individual undergoes an awakening of self-awareness they will recognize their personal responsibility, they will develop a desire for self-critical reflection, that is, they will [wish to] partake in national confession and joint concern...⁷⁸

However, Liu Zaifu was true to his reformist credo and he points to the positive, social function of confession. Redemption is not part of a personal quest, but rather a prerequisite for the new and correct political and social orientation of the individual:

We engage in self-examination so as to be able to adjust ourselves more readily to modernization, and so we are all the more equipped to participate in it. It is not to be a form of abject self-negation, but rather a positive act whereby we will find value in the lessons of history and be all the more clear-headed as we stride towards the future. The path of self-reflection and criticism is that of self-love and self-strengthening; it is the path of positive change and advancement. Our motherland is at a turning point in history; it wants to free itself of poverty and advance to strength and greatness. Writers who deeply love their country will use their powerful skills to mobilize and encourage our people to join in the struggle, to advance, to create, to offer the light and warmth of their lives to the present great age. Our writers will bring to completion this glorious social task.⁷⁹

I have commented elsewhere on Liu Zaifu's statement in relation to the Chinese Velvet Prison.⁸⁰ It is this last statement in particular which is at glaring variance with Liu Xiaobo's view of the confessional. Liu Xiaobo was not interested in using confession to purge himself of the guilt of being a witness of the Cultural Revolution; nor did he wish to engage in a redemptive action merely to align himself better with the forces of reform.

VI

A [destructive] kalpa destiny is now at work, which is called forth by the crimes committed by the tyrannical rulers, and also by the karmic activities of the people developed from immeasurable cycles of transmigration. When I take a look at China, I know that a great disaster is at hand.

Tan Sitong, 1897⁸¹

The unique thing about man is that he is capable of being aware of his tragic fate; he can be aware of the fact that he will die; he can be aware that the ultimate meaning of the universe and life itself is unknowable. A nation that is without an

awareness of tragedy and death is to some extent a nation that is still in the mists of primal ignorance.

Liu Xiaobo⁸²

Liu Xiaobo's call for personal confession and repentance repeats attempts at 'self-renewal' made by Chinese intellectuals since the end of the Qing dynasty. An important element of this is the concept of redemptive thought or action as mentioned in the above.

When he wrote in the June 2 proclamation of the hunger strikers, 'Every Chinese must share in the responsibility for the backwardness of the Chinese nation,' Liu Xiaobo was acknowledging the role of the individual in the state of Chinese affairs. It is a central theme also in his essay 'On the Doorstep of Hell.' This is an awareness familiar to Western writers,⁸³ and one that does not, in fact, mark such a radical departure from the Chinese intellectual tradition of the late 19th and 20th century, as we can see from Tan Sitong's writings at the end of the Qing dynasty. It may be relevant here to quote a few statements made by Huang Yuansheng, an intriguing early Republican writer and the author of a series of confessional writings which in spirit are not unrelated to what Liu Xiaobo has said on the subject.

Huang Yuansheng (*zi* Yuanyong, 1883?-1915) was the author of a fascinating essay entitled 'Confessions' (*Chanhuilu*) published shortly before his death on Christmas Day, 1915. Born in Jiujiang, Jiangxi, into a scholar's family, Huang was the youngest *jinshi* in the last round of imperial exams of the Guangxu reign. He was 21. He immediately went to Japan to study and returned to China shortly after the 1911 Revolution to become a journalist. After a short career as a reporter, one which earned him the reputation as 'a genius of journalism,' he was pressured by President Yuan Shikai, the presumptive emperor, into writing in favor of the new monarchy. After much hesitation, Huang wrote a non-committal piece on the subject. He was directed to make it more to Yuan's liking and instead fled to Shanghai from Beijing to go into hiding. Shortly after this incident he wrote his 'Confessions.'⁸⁴

After being forced to write his 'unlettered essay' on Yuan Shikai he said, 'I have been fortunate enough to escape from all of that and am determined to concentrate all of my energies on being a responsible person (*yiyi zuoren*) and use my utmost efforts to confess the guilt/crimes of my life in the capital.'⁸⁵ He also said, 'In a few months I plan to travel around America in an attempt to regain something of the sense of human worth that I have lost.'⁸⁶ He says that everything he has written concerning politics and the national character was no more than a parroting of the opinions of other literati, and that all of it was 'material for a confession.'⁸⁷ He went on to say:

All of this is because I had no clear understanding of things; I was not adept in self-cultivation and self-reflection; I lightly gave myself over to the discussion of matters of great import and thought myself to be a superior man of the times. [Faced with] the collapse of the country and the crimes [that have been committed] against the people, I must say that I am in part to blame. In the future, I pledge to exert myself in seeking out knowledge, to become independent and a man of stature.⁸⁸

In 'Confessions,' Huang states that his experience in Beijing under Yuan Shikai, and indeed the years leading up to it, had created in him a feeling of 'schizophrenia.' He feels as though his soul (*hun*) is dead while his body (*xing*) lives on. Huang Yuansheng is also a member of that transitional generation caught between the old and the new; a man who is willing to apportion blame for his dilemma between both society, or history, and himself. Yet, even in his grim despair, he holds to a very positivistic philosophy, one that he announces in no uncertain terms at the end of his confession:

I am of the opinion that the most essential thing is for every aspect [of the society] to undergo reform (*gaige*). Now, to reform the state it is necessary to reform the society, and to do that it is necessary to reform the individual, for the society is the basis of the state, and the individual the foundation of the society. I have no desire to question the state, or society, nor, in fact, other people. But I must first question myself, for if I am incapable of being a man what right do I have to criticize others, let alone the society and the state?⁸⁹

And it is here that we find a fascinating insight into the makeup of a 20th-century Chinese literatus-intellectual. This is a new being, one conditioned by the Confucian tradition of state service and involvement so succinctly stated in the *Great Learning*. He wants to reform himself but thinks very much along the lines of the traditional literatus: The change is for the sake of the society and the country, even if the reform is completely different in content from the past, the structure of tradition remains. The above quotation from Huang Yuansheng is also relevant in our review of Liu Xiaobo's involvement in the 1989 protest movement. Liu was highly critical of the self-dissipating aspect of the student movements since 1979, declaring, 'I see the shadow of China's numerous peasant rebellions in the hot-headed enthusiasm of these movements.'⁹⁰ Like Huang Yuansheng, Liu Xiaobo was aware of the need for action not only in the public forum but in one's own life; and like Huang he views the hierarchy of self-reform very much in a Confucian order.

At the same time as staging mass political demonstrations within the wider political sphere, people have to engage in detailed, down-to-earth, and constructive actions in the immediate environment. For example, democratization can start within a student group, an independent student organization, a non-official publication, or even the family. We can also carry out studies of the non-democratic way we live in China, or consciously attempt to put democratic ideals into practice in our own personal relationships (between teachers and students, fathers and sons, husbands and wives, and between friends).⁹¹

VII

Prior to this [the 1989 protest movement] the students of Peking University had become extremely degenerate; and the moral standards of the people of Beijing had reached an unprecedented low. The awareness of this all-embracing crisis among people fired a desire for self-destruction. Upon receiving the order to evacuate [Tiananmen] some people slit their wrists with broken glass. For them life was now meaningless; they had no confidence in the nation at all.

Duoduo, June 1989⁹²

The concept of 'awakening,' *xing* or *juexing*, one common in the writings of Chinese reformers and revolutionaries from the turn of the century, was also a feature of the 1989 protest movement. The movement excited people previously caught in the nihilistic vortex of 1988. Liu Xiaobo expressed the desire for people to participate in protest as part of a civil action of redemption; many people felt that they were being roused by the students' spirit of daring from a long period of social and political apathy.

Banners with the single character '*xing*' writ large on them were prominent.⁹³ In the streets during the hunger-strike week people excitedly declared that 'the Chinese have woken up'; it was seen as a self-awakening as opposed to the organized standing up of the Chinese people declared by Mao Tse-tung from the rostrum of Tiananmen in 1949. When people began to realize that this epiphany with Chinese characteristics was doomed to failure and even to be crushed, many participants in the protests became suicidal. The mood of elation turned for some to one of extreme pessimism; having been awakened and redeemed through participation in the movement the sense of loss and hopelessness was now far stronger than it had been in 1988 or early 1989 when the capital was suffused with a *fin-de-siècle* ambience. Now the atmosphere was apocalyptic.

Blood and sacrifice were symbols throughout the protest movement. Even in its earliest phase, when writers and intellectuals petitioned the government to release China's political prisoners in February, the poet Bei Dao, one of the organizers of the letter of 33 intellectuals, said he had written a will. Wills were also written by students on the eve of the April 27 march in defiance of the *People's Daily* editorial of the previous day, which had condemned the student demonstrations as 'turmoil' instigated by a small number of plotters. But it was not until the hunger strike of May 13-19 that the specter of death and martyrdom loomed high over Tiananmen Square. The strikers' declarations bespoke death with lines like: 'We use the strength of death to fight for life,' and 'Death awaits the broadest and eternal echo.'⁹⁴ Although they claimed that they were too young to wish for death, the symbols of the protest became increasingly sanguine.

Some of the strikers even wrote their oaths in blood, recalling unintentionally the way Chinese Buddhist monks once copied sutras in blood when pledges were made. And it was not long before signs and shirts with gruesome blood markings appeared. For some of the strikers refusing food was not enough. Twelve of them, after toying with the idea of self-immolation, decided to foreswear water as well. This group of students from the Central Drama Academy were separated from the others and isolated in a bus parked at the northern entrance of the Great Hall of the People. A cordon was put up around the area like a giant mandala and supporters circumambulated it often in tearful silence. It was a tragically effective way to elicit an outraged response from the people of the city. The bus had the number of hours during which the students had gone without food and water written up on it. The lighting towers on either side of the Square were occupied by students who hung red-spattered banners with the word 'Sacrifice' (*canlie*) on them.⁹⁵ Others wore T-shirts patterned with red, possibly blood, and although the mudra of the movement was the 'V' for victory sign, the red and white headbands worn by the students bespoke rather of a suicidal kamikaze spirit. Indeed, there was something about these young people who had pledged themselves to death for the sake of a cause that now had

as much to do with honor and self-esteem as anything; it was reminiscent of that ‘splendid death’ (*rippa na shi*) pursued by the Japanese *shimpû* pilots.⁹⁶ At other times the rhetoric had an unmistakable Chinese resonance. At one point during the hunger strike I saw a group of either workers or local residents circumambulating the strikers’ enclosure carrying a large banner on which was written the legend ‘Neither bullets nor swords can harm us’ (*daoqiang buru*), chilling bravado straight from the Boxer Rebellion of 1900. It was people who expressed such sentiments who presumably went on to form the ‘dare to die squads’ (*gansidui*).⁹⁷

Sacrifice for the cause, while having a venerable tradition in China, has also been a central feature of Chinese communist education. The role models for Chinese youth were for decades the selfless martyrs Wang Jie, Ouyang Hai and even the red samaritan Lei Feng (who died in far from heroic circumstances: He was felled by a wayward telegraph pole).⁹⁸ The sentiments behind the Party slogan, ‘Fear neither hardship nor death’ (*yi bupa ku, er bupa si*), launched on the nation with the PLA campaign to learn from Wang Jie — a soldier in 1965 who had selflessly sacrificed himself for the safety of his comrades by jumping on a rogue bundle of explosives — were drummed into children in 1969. Twenty years later those children would form the main body of activists in the 1989 protest movement. On October 1, fearful of terrorist retribution for the massacre, the authorities ordered the handpicked revelers who were permitted to dance in Tiananmen Square to emulate Wang Jie. They were instructed to hurl themselves on any explosive device found during the celebrations and make a sacrifice for the nation.

As the protests continued one would hear a new refrain. Perhaps it really was necessary for the blood of the young to anoint the cause of democracy in China! Chai Ling, the 23-year old who became the last ‘commander’ of the student mass in Tiananmen Square, was one of those who not only foresaw the bloodshed — as anyone who had taken seriously the dire warnings of the April 26 *People’s Daily* editorial could have — she awaited it with grim purpose. In late May, responding to the questions of an American television reporter who asked what would happen next she said, ‘Bloodshed. That is what I want to tell them. Only when the Square is washed in our blood will the people of the whole country wake up.’ But this was for foreign consumption only. ‘How can I say such things,’ she continued. ‘The students are so young. I feel responsible for them. And I feel that I too must continue to live to fight for the revolution.’⁹⁹ Some students were openly expressing the belief that their death would be worth it if they could arouse the nation,¹⁰⁰ and on the evening of June 3 it was Chai Ling who led the remaining students to swear to die on the Square for the sake of democracy.¹⁰¹ She even disapproved of Hou Dejian’s negotiations with the PLA on the edge of the Square and of Liu Xiaobo and Hou’s demand that the students vote on a withdrawal.

Tan Sitong was one of the first martyrs for the cause of reform in China in the late Qing, going to his death with equanimity. Similarly, Qiu Jin, the woman revolutionary executed in Shaoxing in 1907, welcomed a martyr’s death. In his youth the writer Lu Xun, who died in 1936, offered his blood on the altar of the Yellow Emperor (that is, China) and blood features in many of his classical poems, as it does in the writings and thought of numerous intellectuals before 1949.

The cult of blood offerings and death has been institutionalized in the People's Republic. In language that prefigured the pledge of Chai Ling and her followers, Red Guards in the Cultural Revolution too had sworn to protect China and the revolution with their lives. Post-1949 China had encouraged the love of a martyr's death as an integral part of self-cultivation.¹⁰² The revolutionary tradition of the past century has shrouded death for a cause in a romantic garb. It is a tradition in which 'romanticism and revolutionary impulse fused in a cult of action.'¹⁰³ While foreign observers watched the playing out of the tragic plot of the protest movement, many of its participants were drawn almost hypnotically to the cult of death. The suicidal student pledge contained the lines:

I swear that I will devote my young life to protect Tiananmen and the Republic. I may be beheaded, my blood may flow, but the people's Square will not be lost. We are willing to use our young lives to fight to the very last person.¹⁰⁴

As is usual with revolutionary symbolism, it was a cult that worked both ways. The troops in the martial law invading force took an oath on the eve of the Beijing massacre which read in part:

If I can wake up the people with my blood, then willing I am to let my blood run dry;

If by giving my life the people will awake, then happily do I go to my death.¹⁰⁵

VIII

Perhaps my personality means that I'll crash into brick walls wherever I go. I can accept it all, even if in the end I crack my skull open. At least I'll have brought it upon myself; I won't be able to blame anyone else.

Liu Xiaobo, November 1988¹⁰⁶

Q: Do you know who the three most obstinant men in China are?

A: Deng Xiaoping, Zhao Ziyang, and Liu Xiaobo.

Post-massacre joke

Liu Xiaobo, while emphasizing in the hunger proclamation that 'We search not for death, but for true life,' realized there was something both vainglorious and even suicidal about the event. Liu's actions after his escape from the square on early June 4 indicate a nearly suicidal nonchalance on his part. He took refuge in a safe house for two days, rejecting suggestions that he consider hiding in the countryside for a while. 'What would I do there?' he retorted. He had lost his passport on the Square and was anxious to go into the streets to see what was happening. While his friends were sinking into despair at the prospects of civil war on June 5, Liu Xiaobo was in high spirits, joking, smoking non-stop, and eating as usual. Despite repeated warnings not to use the telephone, which his fellows were certain was bugged, Liu rang friends constantly, starting every conversation with a blustering, 'This is Xiaobo!' He then went to another house, and from there late on the night of June 6, he decided to take a friend home on his bicycle. They were knocked

down by men who jumped out of an unmarked van. Liu was bundled into the vehicle. His detention was not reported in the Chinese press until June 24.¹⁰⁷

Following the official disclosure of his being taken into custody in June, the mainland Chinese press lavished more newsprint on Liu than any other detainee, including the journalist Dai Qing and the student leader Wang Dan. He has also been the object of a singular honor: The Youth Press of China published a volume of denunciations of him in September — *Liu Xiaobo: the Man and his Machinations* — with two appendices containing some of his best statements and articles, the latter being reproduced in full. What is so extraordinary is that when Fang Lizhi, Liu Binyan, and Wang Ruowang were denounced in 1987, their speeches, comments, and articles were edited and published in a restricted edition within the Party for criticism. Liu Xiaobo's outrageous writings — in particular devastating political articles such as his long piece on Hu Yaobang, 'Our Suggestions' and 'Hunger Strike Proclamation,' powerful and reasoned critiques of one-party rule — were on sale to all and sundry.

Liu has been named as one of the 'organizers and planners' of the 'counterrevolutionary insurrection,' and as the key link between the Chinese Democratic Alliance in America (Hu Ping, Chen Jun, et al.), the Stone Company in China (Wan Runnan) and the student movement (Wuerkaixi, etc.).¹⁰⁸ In fact, from early May his alleged role as a liaison man for China Spring was hinted at by State Council spokesman Yuan Mu.¹⁰⁹ During my last meeting with him on May 27, Liu said he had heard the Beijing Municipal Committee was planning to frame him on this account, even though he had no organizational connections with the group.

Criticism and condemnation have been part of the course in Liu Xiaobo's career. One of the exceptional things about him is that he never identified or curried favor with the literary or cultural factions of Beijing. In fact, he condemned the egregious 'cronyism' of the literati in no uncertain terms.

The famous in China are much taken with acting as benefactors of others who caress and suckle the unknown. They use a type of tenderness which is almost feminine to possess, co-opt, and finally asphyxiate you. This is one of the peculiarities of Chinese culture.... Some people have the talent to excel, but shying from the dangers of going it alone, they instead seek out a discoverer (*Bo Le*). They look for support, for security, so they can sleep easy; lunging into the bosom of some grand authority or other, and doze off in their warm embrace.¹¹⁰

Wang Meng, the Party novelist who completed the cycle of transmigration from writer to bureaucrat to writer in September 1989, once said that Liu Xiaobo (although he did not name him) 'would lose popularity as quickly as he gained it.'¹¹¹ Indeed, Liu could expect little sympathy or support from the writers and intellectuals of China since he had disparaged them mercilessly, by name, in his writings. Even more devastating than his individual attacks was his summation of the 'cultural industry' of socialist China.

In the Chinese literary scene, factional cronyism is all too common. It is virtually impossible to make a move without the backing of a 'coterie'...In fact, 'coteries' restrain individual artists, they encourage homogenization, lead to mutual admiration societies, and therefore mutual deception. Constantly on the lookout for allies, 'coteries' are the most typical expression of the absence of

individuality among Chinese intellectuals.... The tragedy of it is that upon discovering one's individual weakness there is no whole-hearted attempt to enrich oneself and seek inspiration, rather people seek desperately to put themselves under the banner of some 'famous person,' which allows them to feel emboldened — even if only momentarily, by their affiliation with a 'coterie.'¹¹²

Such comments appended to his critique of the leading 'misty' poets, including a number of self-styled dissidents and neo-cultural icons, the 'roots' literature stars such as Ah Cheng, Han Shaogong, and Zheng Yi, and a whole range of older establishment figures, did little to win Liu Xiaobo favor with the stars of the new age or their claque. Passing through Hong Kong in November 1988, he lambasted the notion that Jin Guantao, Li Zehou, and Wen Yuankai were three of the four great intellectual leaders of China (he excluded the fourth, Fang Lizhi altogether, saying he was not a leader), and criticized them for their desire to be 'discoverers.'¹¹³ Liu Zaifu and Li Zehou made their animosity more than clear in a dialogue they had in early 1988, published in the April 14 *People's Daily*. Without naming him they condemn Liu Xiaobo in the tone of elders lecturing some wayward youth: 'I certainly have something to say to those not particularly outstanding but iconoclastic young people,' declared Li Zehou. Liu Xiaobo had dismissed Liu Zaifu in 1986, and he was equally contemptuous of Li Zehou. Not only did he devote a book to a critique of the philosopher, in the copy he sent me he wrote the following inscription: 'There's no need to fear the mediocre; what one must fear is having truck with them. Fortunately, I now understand what's wrong with this book.'¹¹⁴

The attacks on Liu by the members of major literary factions or their mates have never ceased. What is relevant here is the fact that because he offended all of these cozy groupings in China and their sympathizers in the higher echelons of the Party, government, and army, there is virtually no one who would be willing to speak out on Liu's behalf, even though his rabid critics have literally called for his blood. He is an ideal sacrifice: Many will make *pro forma* protestations at his treatment, but few will feel any real sympathy for this irascible and unrelenting critic.

By far the most devastating attacks on Liu Xiaobo, however, have come from another quarter, that of the intriguing 'cultural conservative' He Xin. Liu had attacked He Xin as a proponent of cultural atavism in his 1986 manifesto 'Crisis!' and he countered by condemning Liu as a 'cultural nihilist' of evil intent. In late 1988, He cautioned his readers:

I would like to remind my compatriots that behind the cries of radical anti-traditionalists and iconoclasts so popular today there is a hidden agenda which calls for another Cultural Revolution...

...Amidst the miasma of cultural nihilism, radical-anti-traditionalism, as well as among the warped attitudes and extremism of some young intellectuals, if we sit back and consider things calmly and rationally we can discern in their proclamations many familiar shadows of the past. The difference is that the anti-traditionalism and cultural nihilism of those years marched under the banner of Marx and Mao Tse-tung; today it is hidden under the cloak of Freud and Nietzsche. The thing [the two currents of thought] have in common is their zealotry, their absurd theoretical framework, and their wrong-headed and distorted analysis of Eastern and Western culture. (It is here in particular that I suggest people examine and re-evaluate Liu Xiaobo's theories.)¹¹⁵

In a strategy paper presented to the Central Committee on 28 April 1989, He Xin actually went so far as to name Liu along with Fang Lizhi as chief instigators of unorthodox thinking (in Liu's case it was 'nihilism') in China over the past few years; Liu was thus identified as a progenitor of the 'turmoil' before he even arrived back in China.¹¹⁶ It is also interesting to note that in an official comment on the 'micro-environment' or climate of the April-June protest movement in September, Liu and Fang are tarred with the same brush as 'proponents of national nihilism, national betrayal, and wholesale Westernization.'¹¹⁷

In July 1989, Jin Zhong, editor of *Emancipation Monthly*, expressed the opinion that Liu was to be the major intellectual victim of the present purge, much in the way that Deng Tuo was among the first victims of the Cultural Revolution. Although an inappropriate comparison, one which would certainly infuriate Liu Xiaobo and horrify the long-dead Marxist Deng, the denunciations of Liu in the Chinese press since his arrest would indicate that he is a convenient victim. At the time of writing, Dai Qing and Wang Ruowang were the only other intellectuals in captivity who had been attacked in the nationwide press, and although Yan Jiaqi, Ge Yang, and others have been subject to considerable vilification, they are, after all, still at large in the West.

In fact, the public condemnation of Liu Xiaobo shows that he is not only to be dealt with as a rabid proponent of 'bourgeois liberalization,' but also as a key figure in the 'attempted subversion' and 'armed overthrow' of the People's Republic of China, which was supposedly being manipulated by counterrevolutionary forces within and outside China. Liu's connection with Hu Ping of *China Spring*,¹¹⁸ the timing of his return to China in late April, his friendship with Zhou Duo, an employee of the Stone Company,¹¹⁹ all go toward making him a vital link in the government's case against the 1989 protest movement. Despite headlines in the overseas Chinese press that the authorities are planning to execute Liu,¹²⁰ and he is said to have been tortured by his interrogators at Qincheng prison in northern Beijing, it is intriguing that he has been used to counter allegations that Tiananmen Square was turned into a killing field on the morning of June 4. When quoted in one 'interview' he was described simply as a 'Chinese lecturer at Beijing Normal University.' That Liu's comments (along with those of Zhou Duo and Gao Xin, also both under arrest) were reproduced in English for foreign consumption in *Beijing Review* shows a new tack in the manipulation of political non-people.¹²¹ This is surely an indication of the government's desperation to improve its image, both in China and overseas, even if that means employing the services of a named counterrevolutionary. By late 1989, officially Liu has still only been 'detained for questioning,' and *China Spring* reported in early 1990 that he was housed in the relatively salubrious Chaohe Guest House in northwest Beijing.¹²²

The international response to Liu's arrest and denunciation has probably also been a factor in the somewhat irregular treatment of him in the press. Shortly after his arrest, Mi Qiu, an artist friend of Liu, set up a Solidarity Group for Liu Xiaobo in Oslo.¹²³ In the U.S., scholars at Columbia University wrote to China expressing concern about Liu's fate, and the provost telexed the president of Beijing Normal University stating Columbia would like to have Liu back as soon as possible.¹²⁴ In Australia, a petition, which

emphasized that at no point during the protest movement had Liu advocated the use of violence, was signed by 41 writers, including Nobel Laureate Patrick White, David Malouf, Thomas Keneally, and Nicholas Jose, was organized by Linda Jaivin.¹²⁵ A number of private appeals were also sent to the United Nations.

Liu Xiaobo's unrepentant attitude in the face of his captors has gained him something of a mythological stature in the Chinese capital. Among university students, Liu is now said to be regarded as 'the backbone of Chinese intellectuals.'¹²⁶ Overseas, his comments on repentance are even accepted by at least one former critic as being a necessary element of Chinese intellectual debate.¹²⁷

IX

I hope that I'm not the type of person who, standing at the doorway to hell, strikes an heroic pose and then starts frowning with indecision.

Liu Xiaobo¹²⁸

It is interesting that after June 4, in the two days before his arrest, Liu talked constantly about the sense of camaraderie, the *geme'r yiqi*, he had discovered on the Square. In particular he felt closely bound to the other three hunger strikers, Hou Dejian, Gao Xin, and Zhou Duo. While the expression *geme'r* has a range of meanings, for Liu it indicated a feeling of 'mateship,' a bond with those of his own generation that was marked by equality and respect. It was born of a sense of shared experience; Liu felt united with the others by the enthusiasm of their pledge on June 2 and by the horrors of June 3-4. Previously very much a loner, this new sense of 'community' promised to have quite an impact on Liu's thinking. Now that Liu is in custody that promise has little chance of being realized. The sentiment of mateship is perhaps more easily understood when considered as an aspect of another dimension of Liu's personality: that of the 'knight-errant' or *xia*. Such rakish and strikingly abrasive individuals or vagabonds have been known throughout Chinese history.¹²⁹ Liu would possibly be offended by such a comparison, but this aspect of his personality has also struck a Chinese observer of Liu's activities during the protest movement.¹³⁰

Liu and his fellows had indicated their commitment to civil society in their 'Hunger Strike Proclamation' of June 2. In fact, they vocalized an attitude that was prominent although only vaguely perceived throughout the protest movement. Both in this statement and many of his writings of 1989, Liu Xiaobo had been moving away from the self-centered, nihilistic world view which had earned him such a name in China. Amazingly, the great theoretical proponent of the irrational became one of the most rational and clear-headed organizers of the protest movement. While remaining true to his credo of 1986 that, 'Everything I am is of my own doing. If I become famous, that is due to my own efforts; if I'm a failure it's my own fault,' he had rejected his earlier blanket dismissal of student demonstrations. To a great extent, I believe that this was because in the 1989 protest movement he was excited by the popular, civilian element of the demonstrations, and saw in them some chance for a new element being introduced into contemporary

mainland Chinese political discourse. His interest in confessional thought and repentance now found a vehicle for expression. He realized redemption through action, particularly group action. Ironically, Liu discovered a meaning in his own quest in early June at the very moment when such a quest had become a dangerous impossibility. Perhaps he was, as Liu Binyan had said, like a moth being drawn to a flame.

In post-massacre China, confessions and repentance are again being used as a means for the individual to achieve redemption. On June 4, Beijing mayor Chen Xitong had set the tone by calling on people to surrender, reflect on their role in the turmoil, and undergo a process of 'repentance and self-renewal' (*huiguo zixin*).¹³¹ Written confessions — a physical act involving an admission of guilt — have been *de rigueur* in many organizations. The earlier liberating effect of action, participation, and support for the protest movement is wiped out by self-negation. For the moment, the Party, and not history, is to be the judge of individual action; the apparatus having taken upon itself the role of 'father confessor.' Hou Dejian, the quirky songwriter and Liu Xiaobo's friend, free once more to speak and protected by his special status as a 'Taiwanese compatriot,' has publicly refused to participate in the charade. He has remained loyal to Liu and in January 1990 authored an extraordinary statement which he would probably delight in. 'You could say I'm the world's stupidest, most amateur dissident,' he said. 'I'm not a politician. I had friends who were dissidents, but... I'm a professional musician. But right now, I'm trying to figure out how to become a passable dissident.'¹³²

But this self-liberation may turn out to have been a step on the road to his self-destruction, as with Tan Sitong and so many Chinese intellectuals of the past century. Indeed, even as He Xin has noted, there is a mechanism within Chinese culture that mitigates against prickly individuals and works toward their elimination.¹³³

¹ I would like to thank Linda Jaivin, W.J.F. Jenner, Andrew Nathan, Bonnie S. McDougall, and Jonathan Unger for their comments and criticisms. This essay was written in 1990 and only minor stylistic changes have been made for this republication.

² From an interview given to Jin Zhong, editor of the Hong Kong magazine *Emancipation Monthly* (*Jiefang yuebao*), see 'Liu Xiaobo, "Black Horse" of the Literary World' (*Wentan 'heima' Liu Xiaobo*), *Emancipation Monthly*, 1988:12, pp. 62, 64, respectively.

³ Li Shuxian made these comments to Linda Jaivin, my [then] wife, when they met in April 1989. Jaime Florcruz adds 'dancers' (*wupai*) and 'drinkers' (*jiupai*) to the list in 'Long Live the Students!', his account of the student demonstrations in *Massacre at Beijing: China's Struggle for Democracy*, edited by Donald Morrison, Time/Warner, 1989, p. 134. It is no coincidence that the novelist Shen Rong wrote a fictional summary of 1988 entirely in terms of a game of mahjong. See 'The 88 Syndrome' (*Babianian zonghezhen*), *Renmin wenxue*, 1989:4, pp. 4-11. By September 1989, mahjong once more had become a favorite diversion for both students and urban dwellers. The game was given a slang name: 'Reading the 144th Directive of Deng Xiaoping.' See Nicholas Jose, 'China: What Is Going On?', *The Independent Monthly*, October 1989, p. 15. In October 1989, the government put an official ban on mahjong in universities.

⁴ See Mark Elvin, *Self-liberation and Self-immolation in Modern Chinese Thought, The 39th George Ernest Morrison Lecture in Ethnology* (Canberra: The Australian National University, 1978). Elvin's comments on the late Qing activist-martyr Tan Sitong are of particular relevance.

⁵ From 'Crisis! The Literature of the New Age is Facing Crisis' (*Weiji! Xinshiqi wenxue mianlin weiji*), a speech Liu made in September which was subsequently published in *Shenzhen qingnianbao*, 3 October

1986. The value of Liu individualism is perhaps best summed up in the words of the Nobel laureate Joseph Brodsky, who said:

...the surest defense against Evil is extreme individualism, originality of thinking, whimsicality, even — if you will — eccentricity. That is, something that can't be feigned, faked, imitated; something even a seasoned impost couldn't be happy with. Something, in other words, that can't be shared, like your own skin: not even by a minority. Evil is a sucker for solidity. It always goes for big numbers, for confident granite, for ideological purity, for drilled armies and balanced sheets. Its proclivity for such things has to do with its innate insecurity, but this realization, again, is of small comfort when Evil triumphs.

See 'A Commencement Address,' in Joseph Brodsky, *Less Than One, Selected Essays* (London: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 385.

⁶ From an interview with Liu Xiaobo in December 1986. See *Seeds of Fire: Chinese Voices of Conscience*, edited by G. Barmé and John Minford (New York: Hill & Wang, 1988), p. 397. For the full Chinese transcript of the interview, see Bai Jieming, 'Liberation for the Chinese is in Self-awakening' (*Zhongguoren de jiefang zai ziwo juexing*), *The Nineties (Jiushi niandai)*, 1987:3, pp. 61-65. Of course, here Liu is actually reiterating one of the basic themes of the New Culture Movement of the early Republic, the 'liberation of the individual'.

⁷ Liu was, however, an admirer of Fang Lizhi, the astrophysicist-dissident who was regarded as one of the instigators of the 1986 student movement.

⁸ See Jin Zhong, 'Liu Xiaobo, 'Black Horse' of the Literary World,' *Emancipation Monthly*, 1988:12, pp. 59, 60, 64; also Liu Xiaobo, 'On the Doorway to Hell' (*Zai diyude rukouchu — dui Makesizhuyide zaijiantao*), *Press Freedom Herald (Xinwen ziyou daobao)*, No. 11, 30 September, 1989.

⁹ This information is based on 'Biographical Notes' provided by Liu Xiaobo.

¹⁰ See 'Crisis! The Literature of the New Age is Facing Crisis,' *Shenzhen qingnianbao*, 3 October 1986. The editor who ran the article was Xu Jingya, a friend of Liu's from the northeast and a critic who had been denounced and arrested for his writings on contemporary poetry, in particular his 1983 essay 'A Violent Tribe of Bards' (*Jueqide shiqun*). Cao Changqing, another editor of *Shenzhen Youth Daily* who was friendly with Liu Xiaobo, founded the weekly *News Freedom Herald (Xinwen ziyou daobao)* in America shortly after the June massacre.

¹¹ Liu's comments on the fiction of writers such as Ah Cheng, Han Shaogong, and Jia Pingwa pointed out their use of rural settings and cultural totems to affirm some form of neo-traditional value structure with which to succor their readers. For a less emotive view of Ah Cheng's fiction, the object of much of Liu's ire, see Kam Louie's 'The Short Stories of Ah Cheng: Daoism, Confucianism, and Life,' in Louie's *Between Fact and Fiction, Essays On Post-Mao Chinese Literature & Society* (Sydney: Wild Peony, 1989), pp. 76-90.

¹² See 'Wang Meng Discusses Art and Literature' (*Wang Meng tan wenyi*), *Zhongguo wenhuabao*, 26 November 1986. Many of Wang's comments are clearly directed at Liu Xiaobo.

¹³ *The Fog of Metaphysics (Xing'ershaxuede miwu)*, Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1989, Liu's personal history of Western philosophy. I would like to thank David Kelly for bringing this work to my attention.

¹⁴ See Liu, 'Further Comments on the Crisis Facing the Literature of the New Age' (*Zailun xinshiqi wenxue mianlin weiji*) *Baijia*, 1988:1, pp. 12-26.

¹⁵ 'On Solitude' (*Lun gudu*), *Baijia*, 1988:2, p. 4. I have quoted this passage in 'Arrière-pensée on an Avant-Garde: The Stars in Retrospect', *The Stars: 10 Years* (Hong Kong: Hanart 2 Gallery, 1989), p. 77.

¹⁶ Liu's thinking, especially his discussions of solitude and tragedy, is much influenced by Nietzsche. Liu admired the German philosopher for his courage and uncompromising attitudes. See, for example, Liu's *The Fog of Metaphysics*, pp. 345ff, and 'Metaphysics and Chinese Culture' (*Xing'ershaxue yu Zhongguo wenhua*), *Xinqimeng I*, 1988:10, pp. 73-74, 75. In his study 'The Highest Chinadom: Nietzsche and the Chinese Mind, 1907-1989,' David Kelly discusses Nietzsche's renewed role 'as a source of critical enlightenment' in contemporary China with particular reference to Liu Xiaobo.

¹⁷ From a letter dated 23 September 1988.

¹⁸ The present writer, although impressed by Liu's earlier literary criticism as reflecting the urban ambience of late 1980s China, had previously suggested to Liu that his work may have been best suited to a column in the *Beijing Evening News*. At the time, I had read little of his philosophical work.

¹⁹ Jin Zhong, 'Liu Xiaobo, "Black Horse" of the Literary World,' *Emancipation Monthly*, 1988:12, p. 60.

²⁰ See Liu Xiaobo, 'Foreigners' Salons and Cultural Aggression' (*Yangshalong yu wenhua qinlüe*), *Emancipation Monthly*, 1989:3, pp. 79-82. The first part of Liu's article is a riposte to Yang Manke's ill informed 'Trivia of the Peking Foreigners' Salons' (*Beijing yangshalongde xingxing sese*), *Emancipation Monthly*, 1989:1-2, pp. 14-16. The central questions raised by Yang are, in turn, inspired to some extent by my own 'Peking Foreigners' Salons' (*Beijingde yangshalong*), *The Nineties*, 1988:3, pp. 94-95. Further to this subject, see also Liu Xiaobo in 'Metaphysics and Chinese Culture,' *Xinqimeng I*, 1988:10, pp. 74-75.

²¹ From a letter to the writer dated 24 January 1989.

²² See Liu Xiaobo, 'Contemporary Chinese Intellectuals and Politics' (*Zhongguo dangdai zhishifenzi yu zhengzhi*), *Cheng Ming (Zhengming)*, 1989:4, pp. 78-81; 7, pp. 74-77; 8, pp. 90-91; 9, pp. 88-90, and so on.

²³ 'At the Doorway to Hell' (*Zai diyude rukouchu — dui Makeshuyide zaijiantao*), *Press Freedom Herald*, 30 September, 1989.

²⁴ Wang Zhao, 'Grabbing Liu Xiaobo's Black Hand' (*Zhuazhu Liu Xiaobode heishou*), *Beijing ribao*, 24 June 1989.

²⁵ See Bei Ling, 'No Other Choice — My Friend Liu Xiaobo' (*Bie wu xuanze — ji wode pengyou Liu Xiaobo*), *Ming Pao Monthly (Mingbao yuekan)*, 1989:8, pp. 32-33. Bei Ling is the pen name of Huang Beiling. The Chinese title of the seminar was *Zhongguo xiandai zhishi fenzi ziwo fanxing taolunhui*. A tape-recording was made of the proceedings, but I was not been able to consult it when writing this essay.

²⁶ In Liu Xiaobo, *The Man and his Manipulations (Liu Xiaobo qiren qishi)*, the mainland book-length denunciation of Liu edited by Zheng Wang and Ji Kuai (Beijing: Qingnian chubanshe, September 1989), Liu is named as having written the open letter that Hu Ping, Chen Jun, and eight others sent to the demonstrating students from New York on April 22 (p. 129).

²⁷ See Chen Jun, 'My Days with Liu Xiaobo' (*He Liu Xiaobo zai yiqide rizi*), *Emancipation Monthly*, 1989:7, p. 63.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ See Wang Zhao, 'Grabbing Liu Xiaobo's Black Hand.'

³⁰ Chen Jun, 'My Days with Liu Xiaobo,' p. 63.

³¹ Chen Jun, p. 26.

³² Bei Ling, 'No Other Choice,' p. 33. In early 1990, Bei Ling commented, not without some regret, that Liu Xiaobo chose public opposition to authoritarianism instead of continuing with his work in the social sciences. See 'Choice, a Tragedy of Fate — reflections on the individual and existence,' *China Spring*, 1990:3, p. 96.

³³ Liu, 'Metaphysics and Chinese Culture,' *Xinqimeng I*, 1988:10, p. 74.

³⁴ A comment Liu Binyan made to Jin Zhong, editor of *Emancipation Monthly*, during his June trip to Hong Kong. See Jin's essay 'From Black Horse to Black Hand' (*Cong heima dao heishou*), *Emancipation Monthly*, 1989:7, p. 60. See also Chen Jun, 'My Days with Liu Xiaobo,' *ibid.*, where he comments on Liu Binyan's attitude: 'After Xiaobo had returned [to China], Liu Binyan criticized him for being eager to be in the limelight.'

³⁵ Initially published in the American Chinese language daily *Shijie ribao*, the article was subsequently reprinted in Hong Kong. See 'The Tragedy of a Tragic Hero — Three Critiques of the Phenomena Surrounding Hu Yaobang's Death' (*Beiju yingxiongde beiju — Hu Yaobang shishi xianxiang pinglun zhi yi, er, san*), *Emancipation Monthly (Jiefang yuekan)*, 1989:5, pp. 30-34. A full translation of this article can be found in *New Ghosts, Old Dreams: Voices from Tiananmen Square*, edited by Geremie Barmé and Linda Jaivin. According to a later *People's Daily* denunciation, this article was broadcast in Beijing on the 'Independent [Student's Union] Station' shortly after Liu returned to China. See Shi Dawen, 'From Being an "Outrageous Man" to Becoming a "Black Hand" — Revealing Liu Xiaobo's Reactionary Mien' (*Cong 'kuangren' dao 'heishou' — jielu Liu Xiaobode fandong mianmu*), *People's Daily*, 29 September 1989.

³⁶ Liu, 'The Tragedy of a Tragic Hero,' p. 30.

³⁷ Qu Yuan (3rd century B.C.), supposed author of the *Chuci* (translated by David Hawkes in his *Songs of the South*), having been dismissed by his king, is said to have drowned himself in the Miluo River.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Liu, 'The Tragedy of a Tragic Hero,' p. 32.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Liu, 'The Tragedy of a Tragic Hero,' p. 31.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Liu, 'The Tragedy of a Tragic Hero,' p. 33.

⁴⁴ Liu and Hou Dejian showed me a hand-written version of this program shortly after May 20. The full text of this important document is reprinted in Zheng Wang and Ji Kuai's *Liu Xiaobo: The Man and His Manipulations*, pp. 131-36.

⁴⁵ These questionnaires were used in three public opinion polls. For a translation of this material, see Woei Lien Chong and Fons Lamboo, 'Beijing Public Opinion Poll on the Student Demonstrations Held on 1, 2, and 7 May 1989, Poll Work Group, Psychology Department, Beijing Normal University,' *China Information*, The Documentation and Research Centre for Contemporary China, Leiden, Vol. IV, No. 1 (Summer 1989), pp. 94-124. Sociologists who have seen this material tell me it is both amateurish and unreliable.

⁴⁶ Liu Xiaobo, 'An Appeal to Overseas Chinese and All Concerned Overseas People' (*Gao haiwai huaren yiji yiqie guanxin wentide haiwai renshi shu*), in *Selected Source Documents from the Chinese Democracy Movement*, Vol. I (*Zhongguo minyun yuan ziliao jingxuan I*) (Hong Kong: Shiyue pinglun chubanshe, 1989), p. 14.

⁴⁷ For details of their activities, see Li Yuan's 'Who was the real "black hand" on Tiananmen Square?' (*Shei shi Tiananmen guangchangde zhenzheng 'heishou'*), *China Spring (Zhongguo zhi chun)*, 1990:1, pp. 7-9.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Shi Dawen, 'From Being an "Outrageous Man" to Becoming a "Black Hand" — Revealing Liu Xiaobo's Reactionary Mien', *People's Daily*, 29 September 1989.

⁴⁹ She Shao Jun, 'The "Independent Kingdom" Under the Nose of the Communist Party' (*Gongchandang bizi xiamiande 'duli wangguo'*), *China Spring*, 1990:1, pp. 10-13.

⁵⁰ Earlier, Wuerkaixi, having been told that I was Australian, commented that he was sure he would get on well with Bob Hawke, because he believed the prime minister had some Tartar ancestors.

⁵¹ 'The Tragedy of a Tragic Hero,' p. 33.

⁵² Details of the unattractive inner workings of the student movement can be found on the front page of the Hong Kong *Ming Pao Daily* of 2 June 1989. Here it is reported that Chai Ling was abducted by a group of students outraged by her conduct. They are said to have extracted a confession from her, and a tape of that confessions was rumored to have found its way to France. [For more on this, see the film *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*, Boston, 1995, and the website: www.tsquare.tv.]

⁵³ See 'Our Suggestions,' Liu Xiaobo: *The Man and His Manipulations*, pp. 131-36. It should be noted that Wang Juntao had been actively interested in the question of civil society for some years and had been writing on the subject. See Shao Jun's article in *China Spring*, *ibid.* It is quite possible that 'Our Suggestions' was influenced by Wang and his fellows.

⁵⁴ Jin Zhong, 'Liu Xiaobo, "Black Horse" of the Literary World,' *Emancipation Monthly*, 1988:12, p. 61.

⁵⁵ Gao Xin reportedly was detained by the police in late June, while Zhou Duo was captured in Shanghai while planning his escape from China in July. See Wei Mingjian, 'Your Pen is also a Lethal Weapon!' (*Nide bi ye hui chengwei xiongqi*), *Jiushi niandai*, 1989:8, p. 80. Hou Dejian was, for some 10 weeks, in hiding in the Australian Embassy in Beijing. After obtaining assurances that he would not be arrested, he left the embassy in August. All four hunger strikers are quoted in Qiu Yongsheng, Huang Zhimin, Yi Jianru, Zhang Baorui, and Zhu Yu, 'A Peaceful Retreat, No one Died' (*Heping cheli wu ren siwang — 6 yue 4 ri Tiananmen guangchang qingchang dangshiren fangtanlu*), *People's Daily*, 19 September 1989.

⁵⁶ Michael Fathers and Andrew Higgins, *Tiananmen: The Rape of Peking*, London: The Independent/Doubleday, 1989, p. 90. A more serious account of the strike can be found in Scott Simmie and Bob Nixon's *Tiananmen Square* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1989), pp. 166-69. Official Chinese reports, including Mayor Chen Xitong's speech on the protest movement, called the strike 'a farce' (*naoju*), departing from the strident language usually used to describe 'counterrevolution.'

⁵⁷ For example in Wang Zhao's, 'Grabbing Liu Xiaobo's Black Hand,' *Beijing ribao*, June 24, 1989.

⁵⁸ See, for example, Jimmy Ngai (Wei Shaoen), 'Those Tiananmen Days' (*Tiananmen sui yue*), *Esquire (Junzi zazhi)*, 1989:7, pp. 142-43.

⁵⁹ 'Hunger Strike Proclamation,' *Emancipation Monthly*, 1989:6, pp. 48-49. While *Emancipation Monthly* has printed the proclamation under Liu's name only, other published versions indicate that it was written by all four hunger strikers. Elsewhere the proclamation is entitled 'June 2 Hunger Strike Proclamation' (6.2

jueshi xuanyan). See, for example, *The Tragic Democracy Movement (Beizhuangde minyun)* (Hong Kong: Ming Pao chubanshe, 1989), pp. 112-13. In the *Time* account of events, *Massacre at Beijing: China's Struggle for Democracy*, pp. 23-24, Hou Dejian is named as being the most prominent of the group. Scott Simmie and Bob Nixon in *Tiananmen Square*, p. 167, go so far as to claim that the proclamation is the work of Hou Dejian. Hou has denied this to me. Furthermore, a study of Liu Xiaobo's writings and the proclamation indicate that Liu was the guiding hand behind the document.

⁶⁰ From Liu et al, 'Hunger Strike Proclamation,' p. 49. Liu and Hou asked a prominent Beijing translator to write an English version of their proclamation on June 2. Unfortunately, I have been unable to avail myself of that translation. Liu's critique of the protests once more echoes his comments in 'The Tragedy of a Tragic Hero — Three Critiques of the Phenomena Surrounding Hu Yaobang's Death,' pp. 33-34.

⁶¹ Richard Nations, 'Who Died, and Who Didn't,' *The Spectator*, 29 July 1989, p. 12. Hou Dejian wrote about the events of that morning in 'My Personal Account of the Retreat from Tiananmen Square on June 4' (*Liuyue siri cheli Tiananmen guangchangshi wode qinshen jingguo*). In early August, Western military attaches stationed in Beijing reported that they had been shown a video recording by the Chinese Ministry of Defense in which Liu Xiaobo made a statement. Appearing healthy although tired, Liu told his interviewer/interrogator that he had not personally seen anybody die in Tiananmen Square. In August, this video was subsequently screened (and sold) in both Hong Kong and China. See, for example, *Sing Tao Jih Pao*, 24 August 1989. In mid-September, yet another official account of the morning of June 4 was published, quoting Liu Xiaobo and showing a picture of him being interviewed. See Qiu Yongsheng et al, 'A Peaceful Retreat, No one Died,' *People's Daily*, 19 September 1989. Democratic process seemed something of a chore for activists even after the massacre. When exiled Chinese intellectuals gathered in Paris at the end of September to establish the Front for a Democratic China (*Zhongguo minzhu zhenxian*) the process of drafting and adopting a constitution along democratic lines proved to be debilitating. After the endless preparatory meetings and 10 revisions to the draft constitution, it was finally passed. Yuan Zhiming, a philosopher and one of the writers of the controversial pro-Zhao Ziyang television series *River Elegy*, said: 'Democracy is exhausting, especially for people fresh from the mainland: We're now used to all the processes involved in the practice of democracy.' See *Sing Tao Jih Pao* (Australian Edition), September 26, 1989.

⁶² 'Hunger Strike Proclamation', p. 48. These exclamations were also written up on a banner across the monument in the center of the Square. See Donald Morrison, ed., *Massacre at Beijing: China's Struggle for Democracy*, p. 19. The photo album of the movement, *Beijing Spring, Photographs by David and Peter Turnley* (Hong Kong: ASIA 2000, 1989), includes a picture of Liu haranguing a crowd as Hou Dejian and Gao Xin sit in the shade of an umbrella (pp. 124-25); also Ming Pao's *The Tragic Democracy Movement*, p. 111, has a picture of the four with Hou talking; and *The Beijing Student Movement: Witness to History (Beijing xueyun: lishide jiangzheng)* (Hong Kong: Sing Tao Publishers, 1989), p. 131, shows Wang Dan and Wuerkaixi seated in front of Hou, Zhou and Gao.

⁶³ 'Hunger Strike Proclamation,' p. 48. Liu also talks of the need for re-evaluation and repentance among Chinese intellectuals in 'Arrogance will be Punished by Heaven — on the fatal consequences of moral absolutism in Chinese culture' (Kuangwang bi zao tianze — lun Zhongguo wenhuade daode zhizhangde zhiming miuwu), *Ming Pao Monthly*, 1989:8, pp. 35, 37.

⁶⁴ Jin Zhong, 'Liu Xiaobo, "Black Horse" of the Literary World,' p. 61. This passage echoes Liu's controversial essay 'Mao Zedong, Devil Incarnate' (*Hunshi mowang Mao Zedong*), *Emancipation Monthly*, 1988:11, pp. 31-34.

⁶⁵ Bei Ling, 'No Other Choice,' p. 33.

⁶⁶ From the conclusion to *The Fog of Metaphysics*, p. 433.

⁶⁷ See, for instance, the introduction to *The Fog of Metaphysics*, pp. 44-46, and the chapter on St. Augustine and repentance, pp. 97-107.

⁶⁸ See Liu, 'Arrogance will be Punished by Heaven,' op. cit., p. 37, and Zhu Dake, 'Overcoming the Limit' (*Chaoyue daxian*), *Yishu guangjiao*, 1989:1, pp. 20-30.

⁶⁹ 'Arrogance will be Punished by Heaven,' p. 37.

⁷⁰ 'The Tragedy of a Tragic Hero — Three Critiques of the Phenomena Surrounding Hu Yaobang's Death,' pp. 33-34.

⁷¹ 'The Tragedy of a Tragic Hero — Three Critiques of the Phenomena Surrounding Hu Yaobang's Death', p. 34. A useful digest of the petitions with biographical notes on petitioners and relevant commentaries can

be found in Karima Fumitoshi and Yoda Chimei, ed., *Tachiagaru Chûgoku chishikijin: Hô Rekishi to minshûka no koe* (Tokyo: Gaifuusha, 1989), pp. 6-53.

⁷² Liu Xiaobo, *A Critique of Choice, an exchange with Li Zehou* (*Xuanzede pipan — yu Li Zehou duihua*) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1988), p. 103. Li is one of China's much-vaunted philosophers, and Liu attacks Li in this rabid book-length attack. It is not a scholastic analysis of Li's work, but rather a denunciation of Liu's own nightmarish view of 'Marxist-Confucian' intellectuals. Li Zehou is merely used as an icon or symbol in Liu's attack. For his part, Li dismisses Liu's writings out of hand. He responded to Liu's provocations in an interview published in 1989. See *The May Fourth: Pluralistic Reflections* (*Wusi: duoyuande fansi*) (Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian, 1989), pp. 252-68. Li Zehou's ill-tempered and racist comments on my own view of Liu Xiaobo in this interview are also highly illuminating.

⁷³ Liu, 'Metaphysics and Chinese Culture,' *Xinqimeng I*, 1988:10, p. 76. In particular, Liu seems to be referring to the enthusiastic and emotional response among Chinese writers to Politburo ideologue Hu Qili's 'granting' of creative freedom in 1985. Fang Lizhi is famous for his stand on this question. See, for example, 'Democracy Isn't Bestowed' (*Minzhu bushi ciyude*) in Fang Lizhi, *Minzhu bushi ciyude* (Hong Kong: Zhongguo xiandaihua xuehui, 1987), pp. 225-28; 'China's Despair and China's Hope'; and 'Fang Lizhi on the Question of Human Rights in China' (*Fang Lizhi lun Zhongguo renquan wenti*), *China Spring* (*Zhongguo zhi chun*), 1989:5, p. 12. In the conclusion to their book, Simmie and Nixon quote the quirky literatus Wen Huaisha as saying: 'In China, when you are trying to make some progress, you must make a lot of sacrifices, you must shed your blood. Democracy is not a favor to be conferred on anyone. You must fight for it... .' See *Tiananmen Square*, pp. 205-206.

⁷⁴ *The Fog of Metaphysics*, p. 45.

⁷⁵ The texts of 'Confessions of a Vile Soul — by a Reborn Ugly Chinaman' (*Choue linghunde zibai — yige fuhuoledede chouloude Zhongguoren*) and 'The Confession of a Young Teacher — by a young teacher who knows shame' (*Yige qingnian jiaoshide zibai — yige zhixiude ging nian jiaoshi*), written on April 29, can be found in *Selected Source Documents from the Chinese Democracy Movement*, Volume I, pp. 70-71. Another fascinating and well-written 'confession' was published by a Chinese student studying in Australia. See Cong Jian, 'The True Story of Ah P' (*A P zibai*) in *The Tide Newspaper* (*Haichaobao*), 29 June 1989, p. 34.

⁷⁶ Bo Yang, *Chouloude Zhongguoren* (Taipei: Yiwen tushu gongsi, 1985). A full English version of the speech translated by Don Cohn is available in *Renditions*, 23, pp. 84-103. For details of the appearance of the speech in mainland China, see Bai Jieming (Barmé), 'Murder by Tolerance and Bo Yang Fever' (*'Kuanrongsha' yu Bo Yang re*), *The Nineties*, 1987:1, pp. 11-12. Also Barmé and Minford, *Seeds of Fire*, pp. 373-77, for Bo Yang's comments on his mainland debut.

⁷⁷ Hou Dejian, 'The Beautiful Chinese' (*Piaoliangde Zhongguoren*), *The Nineties*, 1989:6, p. 39.

⁷⁸ Liu Zaifu, 'The Main Current of the Literature of the New Age' (*Xin shiqi wenxuede zhuchao*), *Wenhui* (Shanghai), 8 September 1986.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Barmé, 'The Chinese Velvet Prison: Culture in the "New Age," 1976-89,' *Issues and Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 8, August 1989, p. 63, n. 28 (later revised and published in *In the Red, on contemporary Chinese culture*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

⁸¹ From Tan's treatise *Renxue*, translated by Chan Sin-wai, in *An Exposition of Benevolence, The Jen-hsüeh of T'an Ssu-t'ung*, Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1984, p. 193; the original Chinese can be found on page 284. For the dating of *Renxue*, see Chan, pp. 11-12. For an important analysis of Tan Sitong and his martyrdom, see also Hao Chang, *Chinese Intellectuals in Crisis, Search for Order and Meaning, 1890-1911* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 66-103, especially pp. 102-103.

⁸² Liu Xiaobo, *A Critique of Choice, an exchange with Li Zehou*, p. 57.

⁸³ For example, Tillich writes, 'The individual is not guilty of crimes performed by members of his group if he himself did not commit them. The citizens of a city are not guilty as participants in the destiny of man as a whole, and in the destiny of their city in particular; for their acts in which freedom was united with destiny have contributed to the destiny in which they participate. They are guilty, not of committing crimes of which their group is accused but of contributing to the destiny in which these crimes were committed. In the indirect sense, even the victims of tyranny in a nation are guilty of this tyranny.' From Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. II, pp. 66-68, quoted in John G. McKenzie, *Guilt: Its Meaning and Significance* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1962), pp. 188-89.

⁸⁴ These details are taken from Xu Jilin's 'A Look at the Psychology and Personality of Intellectuals from the Perspective of China's Confessions' (*Cong Zhongguode 'hanhuilu' kan zhishifenzide xintai yu renge*), *Dushu*, 1987:1, pp. 11-12.

⁸⁵ Huang Yuansheng, 'Second Letter to a Reporter of *Jiayin Magazine*' (*Zhi Jiayin zazhi jizhe, qi'er*), *Posthumous Collection of Huang Yuansheng's Writings* (*Huang Yuansheng yizhu*), Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1984 (facsimile reproduction of the 1920 edition), Vol. II, p. 190. In July 1988, I discussed Huang Yuansheng's work with Liu Xiaobo at some length.

⁸⁶ Huang, 'First Letter to a Reporter of *Jiayin Magazine*' (*Zhi Jiayin zazhi jizhe, qiyi*), *Posthumous Collection of Huang Yuansheng's Writings*, p. 188.

⁸⁷ Huang, 'First Letter to a Reporter of *Jiayin Magazine*,' p. 189.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Huang, 'Confessions' (*Chanhuilu*), *Posthumous Collection of Huang Yuansheng's Writings*, Vol. I, p. 134.

⁹⁰ Liu, 'The Tragedy of a Tragic Hero,' p. 34.

⁹¹ Liu, 'The Tragedy of a Tragic Hero,' p. 33. Bo Yang says much the same thing in conversation with Gao Tiansheng. See *The Chinese are Cursed!*, p. 275; and also his reflections on democracy during his 1988 trip to the mainland, which he presented at a seminar at Peking University. See *Homeland (Jiayuan)* (Taipei: Linbai chubanshe, 1989), p. 104.

⁹² The mainland poet Duoduo is a contemporary of Bei Dao. This quotation is taken from a talk he gave at London University, as it was reported in Qiao Lin's 'Duoduo: A Poet from Tiananmen Square' (*Duoduo: laize Tiananmen guangchangde shiren*), *The Nineties*, 1989:8, p. 98. The mood of Beijing in late 1988 and early 1989 is well reflected in pop songs of the time such as 'Don't Crush!,' 'In-house Entrepreneur,' 'Officials: Big Eaters and Drinkers,' and Hou Dejian's 'Get off the stage!' For the lyrics of these songs see Yu Jiwen, 'New Rock from Beijing' (*Beijingde xinyaojun*), *The Nineties*, 1989:6, pp. 104-105.

⁹³ See, for example, the *Sing Tao* newspaper's pictorial collection *The Beijing Student Movement: Witness to History*, pp. 50-51.

⁹⁴ From the pledge of the Beijing University Students, printed in the May 13 extra of *Xinwen daobao* and reprinted in *Selected Source Documents from the Chinese Democracy Movement*, Vol. I, p. 86.

⁹⁵ The word originally meant 'extreme cold;' it later took on the meaning of pathetic or helpless as well.

⁹⁶ See Ivan Morris, *The Nobility of Failure: Tragic Heroes in the History of Japan* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux), 1988, pp. 278-334, especially pp. 289, 294. Morris quotes a haiku by one 22-year-old pilot: 'If only we might fall/Like cherry blossoms in the Spring—/So pure and radiant!'

⁹⁷ The expression 'dare to die' (*gansi*), however, has been in use in Chinese from at least the Han dynasty. Interestingly, the name *gansidui*, while a common modern Chinese translation for the Western word 'commando squad,' was also popular at the end of the Qing dynasty when similar groups appeared. One was the 'Shanghai Women's Northern Expedition Dare to Die Squad' (*Shanghai nüzi beifa gansidui*), founded in November 1911 with 70 members; another was the 'Ying Family Dare to Die Army' (*Yingzi gansijun*) consisting of over 1,000 peasants from Hong Kong, Kowloon, and Huizhou.

⁹⁸ Since June 4, a new selfless martyr has been promoted as a model for the young. This is the Sichuan adolescent student Lai Ning who died in a fire in 1988. See 'A Boy Sets the Example,' in *Beijing Review*, 15-21 January 1990, pp. 6-7.

⁹⁹ Quoted in Fathers and Higgins, *Tiananmen: The Rape of Peking*, pp. 87-88; also in Simmie and Nixon, *Tiananmen Square*, p. 155.

¹⁰⁰ Simmie and Nixon, *Tiananmen Square*, pp. 155-156.

¹⁰¹ See Chai Ling's post-massacre statement for the pledge. The Chinese text can be found in *The Tragic Democracy Movement*, p. 123. Jimmy Ngai's account 'Those Tiananmen Days' in *Esquire*, 1989:7, pp. 144-48, also reveals this death-wish mentality.

¹⁰² On the subject of thanatopsis (meditations on death) and dedication to the revolution in post-1949 and particularly Cultural Revolution China, see Anita Chan, *Children of Mao: Personality Development and Political Activism in the Red Guard Generation* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), pp. 61, 71, 141-42, 155-56.

¹⁰³ See Elvin, *Self-liberation and Self-immolation in Modern Chinese Thought*, p. 18, commenting on Guo Moruo.

¹⁰⁴ See Chai Ling's post-massacre statement in *The Tragic Democracy Movement*, p. 123.

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in Xie Chi and Shi Lu, 'An "Aide-memoire" on the Crushing of the Rebellion' (*Pingbao 'beiwanglu'*), *People's Daily*, July 26.

¹⁰⁶ From a letter dated 7 November 1988, and sent to the writer sent from Oslo, Norway. This statement is very similar to what Liu says in his essay 'On the Doorway to Hell.'

¹⁰⁷ 'Liu Xiaobo has been Detained by Public Security Organs' (*Liu Xiaobo bei gongan jiguan juliu*), *Beijing Daily*, 24 June 1989. Simmie and Nixon in *Tiananmen Square*, p. 205, follow this report. The Hong Kong weekly *Asiaweek* gave the date wrongly as June 12/13.

¹⁰⁸ See, among others, Chen Xitong's speech, and Xie Chi and Shi Lu, 'An "Aide-memoire" on the Crushing of the Rebellion', *People's Daily*, 26 July 1989. For the 'connection' with Stone, see Ye Guang, 'Who did Wan Runnan Play to Crush with his "Stone"?' (*Wan Runnan banqi 'shitou' yao za shei*), *Beijing Daily*, 17 August 1989. Zhou Duo is named as the Stone Company's liaison man with Liu. See also David Kelly, 'Massacre of a Chinese Company', *Financial Review*, 4 October 1989.

¹⁰⁹ See 'Spokesman for the State Council Replies to the Questions of Chinese and Foreign Journalists' (*Guowuyuan fayanren da Zhongwai jizhe wen*), *People's Daily*, 4 May 1989. Fang Lizhi is actually named as a 'behind the scenes manipulator' in this press conference.

¹¹⁰ Liu Xiaobo, 'On Solitude,' pp. 5-6.

¹¹¹ 'Wang Meng Discusses Art and Literature,' *Zhongguo wenhuabao*, 26 November 1989.

¹¹² Liu Xiaobo, 'Further Comments on the Crisis Facing the Literature of the New Age,' p. 18.

¹¹³ See Jin Zhong, 'Liu Xiaobo, "Black Horse" of the Literary World', *Emancipation Monthly*, 1988:12, p. 63 for quote.

¹¹⁴ See note 72.

¹¹⁵ He Xin, 'My Perplexities and Concerns' (*Wode kunhuo yu youli*), *Xuexi yuekan*, 1988:12 pp. 36-37. For the role of He Xin in recent political and cultural debate in China see my article and translation, 'A Word of Advice to the Politburo,' *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, January 1990.

¹¹⁶ He Xin, 'A Word of Advice to the Politburo,' *ibid*.

¹¹⁷ See 'The Meaning of Micro-Environment' (*Ruhe renshi 'xiaoqihou'*), *Liaowang*, 10 September 1989.

¹¹⁸ Chen Jun, 'My Days with Liu Xiaobo,' *Emancipation Monthly*, 1989:7, p. 63. In fact Liu couldn't tolerate the sectarianism of the organization and was only interested in editing *China Spring* — a job he was supposedly offered when he was in America — if it was freed of its political affiliations. Andrew Nathan comments on Beijing Mayor Chen Xitong's accusation — one based on a mistranslation — that Liu advocated violence in 'Chinese Democracy in 1989: Continuity and Change,' *Problems of Communism*, September-October, 1989, p. 26. Linked to the government accusations of Liu's violent intentions is an oft-repeated quote from Liu that 'I have great admiration for Hitler.' Unfortunately, I have not found the origin of this quotation, and none of the mainland criticisms give a source. It is also noteworthy that in Liu's articles and writings appended to the official volume of attacks on Liu Xiaobo, the original article or interview in which this comment is made is not included, which suggests to this writer that it may well have been taken out of context.

¹¹⁹ See Ye Guang, 'Who did Wan Runnan Want to Break with his "Stone"?' *ibid*.

¹²⁰ See, for example, the cover story 'The Plot: CCP Plans to Kill Liu Xiaobo' (*Da yinmou: Zhonggong yao sha Liu Xiaobo*), by Lu Bian in *China Spring (Zhongguo zhi shun)*, 1989:8, p. 6. Also Huang Beiling's announcement, on page 7.

¹²¹ See 'Eye-witness Accounts of the Clearing of Tiananmen Square,' *Beijing Review*, 23-29 October 1989, p. 27. Interestingly, in this account neither Liu nor Hou Dejian mention the fact that they left the Square before the last students. They told friends later on June 4 that they had been carried out on stretchers with greatcoats over their heads as if corpses. Perhaps these remarks were edited out of their interviews. Gao Xin, on the other hand, says he saw no one killed, while on June 4 he said to friends that he had miraculously survived when a group he was with was mowed down by machine-gun fire.

¹²² See the inside back cover of *China Spring*, 1990:1. The Chaohe Guest House is in Miyun district near the juncture of the Chao and Bai rivers.

¹²³ See Mi Qiu, 'Save Liu Xiaobo' (*Yuanjiu Liu Xiaobo*), *Dangdai*, 1989:8, pp. 26-29.

¹²⁴ I would like to thank Andrew Nathan of the East Asian Institute of Columbia University for this information.

¹²⁵ Reprinted in *South China Morning Post*, 26 July 1989, and *Emancipation Monthly*, 1989:8, p. 58.

¹²⁶ See *Press Freedom Herald*, No. 10, 19 September 1989, p. 3. See also the virtually hagiographic comments on Liu by the novelist-cum-editor Ma Jian in his short-lived monthly, 'Liu Xiaobo: The Bravest Man of his Generation' (*Yidai mengshi*), *Daqushi*, 1989:10, p. 85.

¹²⁷ See Yang Manke, 'Yan Jiaqi's Theory and the Chinese Democratic Front Congress' (*Yan Jiaqide lilun yu Minzhen dahui*), *Emancipation Monthly*, 1989:10, pp. 26-27. As a member of the Chinese mainstream intelligentsia in exile, Yuan Zhiming made one of the most positive evaluations of Liu Xiaobo's role in the protest movement in January 1990. The article is an important (and moving) example of a contemporary Chinese intellectual's 'confession.' Yuan writes: 'Shortly after June 4, the communist press published a major denunciation entitled 'Grabbing Liu Xiaobo's Black Hand.' In fact, Liu Xiaobo's hand was the cleanest of all. He stood forward without fear, and at the most critical moment he started a hunger strike in Tiananmen Square. He always made his appeals directly and without artifice. He didn't play those games where you attack people and then run away when there's a danger of being caught. As for the rest of the intellectual world, if we did get involved then you could say our hands really were black...'. See Yudan Zhiming, 'Black Hands and Standard-bearers' (*Heishou Yu qishou*), *News Freedom Herald (Xinwen ziyou daobao)*, No. 22, 20 January 1990.

¹²⁸ 'On the Doorstep to Hell,' *ibid.*

¹²⁹ For a definition of the *xia*, see James J.Y. Liu, *The Chinese Knight-errant*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967, pp. 4-7.

¹³⁰ This observer has written an account of the protests but has yet to publish them.

¹³¹ 'Comrade Chen Xitong's Broadcast Speech' (*Chen Xitong tongzhi guangbo jianghua*), *People's Daily*, 5 June 1989.

¹³² See Kathy Wilhelm, 'Singer uses songs to spread protest word,' an AP report carried in the *Canberra Times*, 20 January 1990.

¹³³ See He Xin, 'On Eliminating the Elite' (*Lun jingying taotai*) originally published in *Mingbao yuekan* 1988:3, reprinted in *He Xin ji fansi, tiaozhan, chuangzao* (Harbin: Heilongjiang jiaoyu chubanshe, 1988).