

The Tiananmen Square massacre, 30 years on

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8 June 2019

Thirty years have passed since heavily-armed Chinese troops, backed by tanks, moved through the suburbs of Beijing on the night of June 3–4, 1989, killing hundreds, probably thousands, of unarmed civilians. The military forces overwhelmed makeshift barricades with brute force as they made their way to Tiananmen Square—the site of weeks of mass protests by students and workers.

Those barbaric events, which demonstrated the willingness of the Stalinist Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime to do anything to stay in power, have gone down in history as the Tiananmen Square massacre. Yet most of the deaths during that murderous assault were of workers who courageously tried to halt the progress of troops to central Beijing. Estimates vary, but up to 7,000 were killed and 20,000 wounded.

Moreover, in the reign of terror that followed throughout China it was the workers who received the harshest penalties, including lengthy jail terms and death sentences. Around 40,000 people were arrested just in June and July, mostly members of Workers Autonomous Federations that had sprung up in the course of the protests.

What is commonly depicted as the crushing of student protesters was in fact a wave of repression directed overwhelmingly against a mass movement of the working class. What had begun in April as student protests calling for democratic reforms had swelled into the millions as workers joined the demonstrations by mid-May, making their own class demands.

The Beijing Workers Autonomous Federation was established on April 20 with a handful of workers and rapidly expanded to become a major organising centre by mid-May. On May 17, up to two million people marched through the centre of Beijing, the majority being workers and their families under the banners of their work units or enterprises. Reflecting the impact of events in Beijing, Workers Autonomous Federations were established in a host of major cities, including Changsha, Shaoyang, Xiangtan, Hengyang and Yueyang.

While moderate student leaders were intent on pressing the CCP bureaucracy for concessions on democratic rights, workers were animated by concerns over deteriorating living standards, soaring inflation and a wave of sackings and closures. The regime's embrace of the capitalist market since the 1970s had led to widening social inequality and rampant bureaucratic corruption and profiteering. Workers were bitterly hostile to the accumulation of privileges and wealth by the top CCP leaders, such as Deng Xiaoping, Li Peng, Zhao Ziyang, Jiang Zemin, Chen Yun and their family members, and were contemptuous of their claims to be communist and socialist.

A statement by workers issued on May 25 expressed the rebellious currents in the working class. "Our nation was created by the struggle and labour of we workers and all other mental and manual labourers. We are the rightful masters of this nation. We must be heard in national affairs. We must not allow this small band of degenerate scum of the nation and the working class to usurp our name and suppress the students, murder democracy and trample human rights." [1]

Premier Zhao Ziyang had been sympathetic to the demands of student leaders and had counselled making small concessions to calls for basic democratic rights. However, no compromise was possible with the

working class, whose unrest threatened the very existence of the regime. As the protest movement rapidly grew in size and confidence, paramount leader Deng Xiaoping removed his ally Zhao as premier, installed hardline Li Peng in his place and ordered the military to violently suppress the protests in Beijing and nationally.

The crisis of Stalinism

The resort to such extreme measures was bound up with the profound crisis of Stalinism, not only in China but internationally. In response to deepening economic and social crises, a turn was underway in China, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union toward the dismantling of centralised bureaucratic planning mechanisms, encouragement of private enterprise and establishment of market mechanisms.

After assuming the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev introduced his keynote policies of *perestroika* (restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness and transparency) that laid the framework for greater autonomy for enterprises outside the central planning mechanisms and, under the guise of democratic reform, sought to establish a base of social support for the regime among the petty bourgeoisie.

Gorbachev's pro-market restructuring also encouraged the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe in their plans for capitalist restoration, making desperate bids to resolve their mounting economic and political crises. These processes dramatically accelerated as Gorbachev signaled that the Soviet Union would not intervene militarily to prop up its Soviet bloc allies, as it had done in Hungary in 1956 to crush the workers' uprising and in Czechoslovakia in 1968 to end liberal reforms. In December 1987, he announced the withdrawal of 500,000 Soviet troops from Eastern Europe.

In a very short period of time, during 1989–90, the Stalinist bureaucracies in one Eastern European country after another moved to restore capitalism, dismantling what remained of nationalised property relations and centralised planning.

In Poland, talks between the government and opposition Solidarity leaders resulted in a deal in April 1989 to hold limited elections. This paved the way for the installation in August of Solidarity leader Tadeusz Mazowiecki as prime minister. He unleashed sweeping pro-market restructuring.

Similar negotiations in Hungary, where the processes of pro-market restructuring were already advanced, led to a new constitution in August 1989. Multi-party elections in May 1990 resulted in a government that junked what remained of centralised planning and carried out wholesale privatisation.

Amid a mounting economic and political crisis, Gorbachev visited Berlin in October 1989 to urge the East German government to accelerate pro-market reforms. Erich Honecker resigned as leader two weeks later. On November 9, the government announced the end of all border

restrictions and Berlin citizens tore down the hated Berlin Wall. Before the end of the month, West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl unveiled a plan to integrate East Germany with capitalist West Germany—a process that was completed by October 1990.

The collapse of the Stalinist regimes in Czechoslovakia, Romania and Bulgaria quickly followed. By the end of 1990, governments throughout Eastern Europe were giving full rein to the plunder of state-owned property, an influx of foreign capital and the dismantling of social services, leading to a precipitous deterioration in living standards.

Gorbachev's policies in the Soviet Union gave rise to intense pressures within the Stalinist bureaucracy and the emerging layer of entrepreneurs for a far speedier dismantling of all fetters on private ownership and market relations. This found expression in the installation of Boris Yeltsin in July 1991 and the implementation of pro-market "shock therapy." In December 1991, the Soviet Union was formally dissolved.

The break-up of the Soviet Union and collapse of the Stalinist states in Eastern Europe led to an orgy of triumphalism in the capitalist media proclaiming the end of socialism. Pundits, politicians and academics, who had foreseen nothing and could explain nothing, exulted over the triumph of the market, even going so far as to pronounce the end of history. In other words, capitalism supposedly represented the highest and final stage of human development. A new period of peace, prosperity and democracy would dawn, they all declared.

The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), based on the analysis made by Leon Trotsky of Stalinism, had rejected the universal adulation of Gorbachev and warned that his policies were rapidly leading to the dismantling of the gains of the first workers' state. Its perspectives resolution entitled "The World Capitalist Crisis and the Tasks of the Fourth International," published in August 1988, made clear that the breakdown of the Soviet Union was not a product of socialism, but rather of Stalinism and its reactionary autarchic conception of "socialism in one country":

The very real crisis of the Soviet economy is rooted in its enforced isolation from the resources of the world market and the international division of labour. There are only two ways this crisis can be tackled. The way proposed by Gorbachev involves the dismantling of state industry, the renunciation of the planning principle, and the abandonment of the state monopoly on foreign trade, i.e., the reintegration of the Soviet Union into the structure of world capitalism. The alternative to this reactionary solution requires the smashing of imperialism's domination over the world economy by linking up the Soviet and international working class in a revolutionary offensive aimed at extending the planned economy into the European, North American and Asian citadels of capitalism. [2]

In the aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the ICFI identified the root cause of the crisis of Stalinism in the processes of the globalisation of production that had been underway since the late 1970s, which had undermined all programs based on national economic regulation. While the crisis of Stalinism was the most immediate and acute expression, these same processes lay behind the international embrace of pro-market restructuring by Social Democratic and Labour parties, and trade unions, and their abandonment of any defence of the social rights of the working class.

Capitalist restoration in China

The events in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union had a profound impact in China, where processes of capitalist restoration had been underway since the 1970s. The CCP's decision in June 1989 to use the military to brutally suppress the working class was in no small measure conditioned by its longstanding fear of a repetition in China of the mass strike movement in Poland in 1980–81 that led to the formation of the Solidarity trade union.

China specialist Maurice Meisner explained that the involvement of masses of workers in the protests in Tiananmen Square on May 17 "did much to rekindle the 'Polish fear' among Party leaders, their decade-old obsession about the rise of a Solidarity-type alliance between workers and intellectuals in opposition to the Communist state. And that fear, in turn, contributed to their fateful decision to impose martial law." [3]

While Deng Xiaoping recognised the affinity of Gorbachev's *perestroika* with the policies that he had already enacted, he did not embrace the political liberalisation of *glasnost*, fearing it would undermine the foundations of the CCP regime. When Gorbachev visited Beijing in mid-May 1989 to cement closer Sino-Soviet ties, the Chinese leadership kept him closeted from public view, anxious that his presence would give further impetus to the protests in Tiananmen Square. The rapid collapse of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe only heightened the determination of the CCP bureaucracy to suppress any opposition.

The roots of the crisis in China lay in the outcome of the 1949 Chinese revolution. The monumental events that brought the Chinese Communist Party to power ended more than a century of imperialist oppression that had mired the country of more than 500 million in squalor and backwardness. It expressed the aspirations of the vast majority of the population for economic security, basic democratic and social rights, and a decent standard of living. Decades of political upheaval and a war against Japanese imperialism from 1937 to 1945 had ravaged the country and left an estimated 14 million Chinese soldiers and civilians dead.

Like the Soviet bureaucracy, however, the new CCP apparatus was based on the reactionary nationalist program of "socialism in one country," which was a repudiation of socialist internationalism and Leon Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution which underpinned the October Revolution in Russia in 1917.

As a result, the course of the revolution and the subsequent evolution of the People's Republic of China (PRC) proclaimed by Mao Zedong in 1949 was distorted and deformed by Stalinism, which dominated the CCP in the wake of Stalin's betrayal of the Second Chinese Revolution of 1925–27. Stalin subordinated the very young CCP to the bourgeois nationalist Kuomintang, resulting in crushing blows to the Chinese Communists and working class in April 1927, and again in May 1927. CCP leaders and members who supported Trotsky's analysis of the tragedy were expelled.

In the wake of the 1949 Chinese Revolution, the pragmatic, nationalist ideology of Maoism led China rapidly into a blind alley. Mao's perspective of a "New Democracy" sought to maintain a bloc with the national bourgeoisie, but the CCP government was driven, under conditions of the Korean War and the internal sabotage by bourgeois and petty bourgeois elements, to go further than intended. By 1956, virtually every aspect of the economy was nationalised and subject to bureaucratic planning along the lines of the Soviet Union, but the working class had no say through its own democratic organs.

The organic hostility of the Maoist regime to the working class was expressed in its repression of Chinese Trotskyists, all of whom were jailed in 1952 amid the rising resistance by workers. As with the Eastern European states, the Fourth International characterised China as a deformed workers' state, a highly conditional formula that placed the emphasis on the deformed, bureaucratic character of the regime.

The national autarky of "socialism in one country" generated worsening economic and social turmoil, and crises for which the CCP bureaucracy

had no solution, leading to bitter internal factional warfare. Mao's fanciful scheme for a peasant socialist society, which underpinned his "Great Leap Forward," ended in economic catastrophe and mass starvation. His factional opponents, led by Liu Shaoqi, followed the Soviet model of bureaucratic planning with its emphasis on heavy industry, but this provided no alternative.

The economic crisis was greatly worsened by the 1961–63 split with the Soviet Union and the withdrawal of Soviet aid and advisers, as the two Stalinist regimes advanced their conflicting national interests. In a last desperate bid to oust his rivals, Mao unleashed the Cultural Revolution in 1966, which rapidly span out of his control, leading to confused and convulsive social struggles that threatened the very existence of the regime. Mao turned to the military to suppress workers who had taken literally his edict to "Bombard the Headquarters," resulting in mass strikes in Shanghai and the formation of an independent Shanghai People's Commune in 1967.

Incapable of resolving the immense economic and social problems wracking the country, and facing a military confrontation with the Soviet Union, the CCP bureaucracy forged an anti-Soviet alliance with US imperialism that laid the basis for China's integration into global capitalism. While Deng Xiaoping is generally credited with initiating market reforms, Mao's rapprochement with US President Richard Nixon in 1972 was the essential political and diplomatic pre-condition for foreign investment and increased trade with the West.

The process of "opening and reform" went hand-in-hand with the imposition of strict discipline and emphasis on boosting production in workplaces. Maurice Meissner noted: "Factory managers dismissed during the Cultural Revolution were restored to their former posts, accompanied by calls to strengthen managerial authority, labour discipline, and factory rules and regulations—and to struggle against 'anarchism' and 'ultra-leftism.' There were dramatic increases in foreign trade and in imports of foreign technology. Veteran party leaders attacked during the Cultural Revolution were 'rehabilitated' at an increasingly rapid pace; by 1973, it has been noted, 'the pre-Cultural Revolution cadres were running the government ministries.'" [4]

From 1969 to 1975, the value of foreign trade increased from \$US4 billion to \$14 billion per annum. From the end of 1972 until mid-1975, China imported whole industrial plants, valued at \$2.8 billion, mainly from Japan and western Europe.

Deng Xiaoping who had been ostracised during the Cultural Revolution as the "No 2 capitalist roader," was rehabilitated, appointed a vice premier of the state council under Zhou Enlai. Deng led the Chinese delegation to a special session of the UN in 1974 where he declared that the "socialist bloc" no longer existed and China was part of the Third World. In the factional power struggle that followed Mao's death in 1976, Deng emerged as the dominant figure in the Stalinist bureaucracy. He embraced US imperialism ever more closely, formalising diplomatic relations in 1979, launching a border war against neighbouring Vietnam, and defending US allies such as the Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet.

From 1978, Deng greatly accelerated the "reform and opening" pro-market reforms. Four Special Economic Zones (SEZs) were established in 1979 in Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Shantou and Xiamen, where foreign entrepreneurs and joint ventures produced goods for export and enjoyed tax breaks and other concessions. A similar system was later implemented in key port cities such as Shanghai. In the countryside, the collectivised communes were dismantled and restrictions removed on the operation of private enterprises. Prices for agricultural produce were lifted. In the cities, moves were made to transform thousands of state-owned enterprises into profit-making corporations. Private enterprises were permitted, the market was increasingly allowed to determine prices for consumer goods, and a "labour market" was initiated, allowing the hiring and firing of workers.

The pro-market reforms led to the rapid rise of social inequality. Millions of former peasants were left landless and forced to seek employment in the cities. In the SEZs, where the capitalist market was given free rein, corruption and criminal activity was rampant, including smuggling, bribery and the theft of state-owned property. The sons and daughters of the top party leaders took full advantage of their political connections to establish their own business empires. With the lifting of price restrictions, inflation rocketed to 18.5 percent in 1988, to which the regime responded by drastically reducing credit and re-imposing import restrictions. Hundreds of thousands of workers lost their jobs, as private enterprises reduced their workforces or closed down altogether. Unemployment, the loss of job security, as well as skyrocketing prices, combined with disgust at the corruption and enrichment of CCP bureaucrats, fueled the social unrest that erupted in the mass protests by workers the following year.

Capitalist restoration following Tiananmen Square

In the aftermath of the bloody crackdown in Tiananmen Square and the police dragnet throughout the country, the factional battle inside the CCP leadership sharpened in the next three years over Deng's program of capitalist restoration. In ordering the troops against workers and students, Deng had removed his chief ally in pro-market restructuring, Zhao Ziyang, as premier. Former Shanghai party leader Jiang Zemin was installed as a compromise choice to the top post of CCP secretary general. The initiative shifted to the so-called hardliners—Li Peng and Chen Yun, who, in criticising Zhao, were also criticising Deng's policies.

However, in advocating restrictions on market relations, Li and Chen based their policies on the status quo ante and the nationalist perspective of "socialism in one country," which had already proven to be a dead-end. They were looking toward the Soviet Union, even as the deformed workers' states in Eastern Europe were collapsing and Gorbachev's policies were undermining centralised planning and nationalised property relations. Their so-called "Soviet faction" represented sections of the Chinese bureaucracy whose power and privileges resided in their control of key sections of state-owned industry and the central apparatus in Beijing.

At the Fifth Plenum in November 1989, Li delivered the main report, based on the recommendations of a revived State Planning Commission. The adopted plan called for cutting inflation to 10 percent in 1990 and economic growth to 5 percent by maintaining tight controls on credit and balancing the national budget. Rural industries would not be allowed to compete with state-owned enterprises. While keeping the SEZs and "open door" policy in place, the new restrictions hit rural and provincial industries, particularly in the south of the country.

While Deng no longer held any official party or state position, he still retained considerable political clout, especially in the southern provinces where the new profit-making industries were concentrated. Deng had sided with the hardliners in opposing any political liberalisation and, above all, supported the 1989 military crackdown, but he was adamant that the restrictions on private enterprises and foreign investment had to be completely dismantled.

The snowballing crisis in the Soviet Union brought matters to a head. An attempted Stalinist putsch in August 1991 to oust Gorbachev and Yeltsin and wind back their program of pro-market restructuring ended in dismal failure. China scholar Michael Marti explained: "This one event changed the thinking about the political equation within the Chinese leadership, including that of Deng Xiaoping. The failure of the Soviet Red Army to support the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in its bid to

regain control threw the CCP into a panic. The Chinese leadership feared that a precedent had been established.” [5]

The factional battle lines were drawn. While the “Soviet faction” began to call into question the entire agenda of pro-market reforms, including the establishment of the SEZs, Deng insisted that the levels of economic growth were too low to maintain employment and social stability. “If the economy cannot be boosted over a long time,” he told a meeting of party elders as far back as late 1989, “it [the government] will lose people’s support at home and will be oppressed and bullied by other nations. The continuation of this situation will lead to the collapse of the Communist Party.” [6]

Deng was also concerned that the crisis in the Soviet Union, following the collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe, would greatly change geo-political relations. Not only had Deng’s strategy sought to balance between the US and the Soviet Union, but his economic policies depended on a large influx of foreign investment, which could potentially shift to exploiting new opportunities opening up in the former Soviet republics.

Along with provincial leaders in the southern provinces, Deng counted on the support of People’s Liberation Army (PLA). The generals had been shocked by the way in which US imperialism and its allies had deployed hi-tech weaponry in the 1990–91 Gulf War to rapidly destroy the Iraqi military. Their conclusion was that China had to invest heavily in modernising the PLA and only Deng’s policies could transform the economy and produce the growth needed to supply that investment.

Deng set out on his “Southern tour” in January–February 1992, just 20 days after the formal liquidation of the Soviet Union in December 1991, accompanied by top generals, the state security chief Qiao Shi and party elder Bo Yibo. As he visited the SEZs and southern cities, he declared that there would be no reversal of economic policies in the face of the Soviet collapse. Dismissing concerns about growing social inequality, he is said to have declared: “Let some people get rich first.”

In a showdown with Chen Yun in Shanghai, Deng reportedly shouted: “Any leader who cannot boost the economy should leave office.” Openly backing capitalist restoration, he declared: “We should absorb more foreign capital and more foreign-advanced experiences and technologies, and set up more foreign-invested enterprises. Do not fear when others say we are practicing capitalism. Capitalism is nothing fearsome.” [7]

Deng prevailed, opening the door for wholesale capitalist restoration that transformed the whole country into a giant free trade zone for the exploitation of cheap Chinese labour. The crocodile tears shed by Western politicians over the Tiananmen Square massacre were rapidly cast aside as foreign investors recognised that the police-state regime in Beijing was willing to use any method, no matter how brutal, to discipline the working class. In 1993, the CCP proclaimed that its objective was a “socialist market economy,” giving a threadbare “socialist” disguise to its embrace of capitalism.

In 1994, the CCP formally established a “labour market,” by legitimising the sale and purchase of labour power. State-owned enterprises were corporatised into companies run for profit. The unprofitable ones were restructured or shut down. The better equipped, in sectors not designated as strategic, were sold off or converted into subsidiaries of foreign transnationals. A small number were preserved as state-owned “national flagships.”

Between 1996 and 2005, the number of employees in state- and collective-owned enterprises halved, from 144 million to 73 million workers. Along with guaranteed life-time employment, the “iron rice bowl” of cradle-to-grave services was also dismantled. Essential services that had previously been provided by state-owned enterprises—childcare, education, health care and pensions—were now left to individual workers.

Chinese capitalism today

The restoration of capitalism in China over the past 30 years has only exacerbated the underlying social tensions within Chinese society and compounded the political and geo-political dilemmas confronting the CCP apparatus.

The extraordinary economic expansion of China to become the world’s second largest economy has rested, in the first place, on the immense gains of the 1949 Revolution that unified China for the first time in decades, created an educated and skilled workforce, and developed basic industries and essential infrastructure. The flood of foreign investment into the country transformed China into the sweatshop of the world and produced a massive 11-fold increase in the economy between 1992 and 2010. This rapid growth, however, did not reflect an inherent strength of the Chinese economy, but rather its role in the world economy, dependent on foreign investment and technology.

The imperialist powers, above all the United States, were more than willing to exploit cheap Chinese labour as long as China’s economic expansion did not challenge their own established geo-political interests. However, the vast quantity of raw materials and energy that Chinese industries require from around the world have increasingly brought it into conflict with the US and other major powers, in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and internationally. Moreover, as China has sought to create its own hi-tech “national champions” such as Huawei and ZTE, the US, under the Trump administration, has declared economic war on Beijing, not just in matters of trade. It has openly opposed Chinese plans to develop and expand hi-tech industries and to more closely link Eurasia to China through massive infrastructure projects under Beijing’s Belt and Road Initiative.

The delusion promoted by CCP leaders that China could, through a “peaceful rise,” become a world power on a parity with the US has been shattered. China’s expansion has brought it into conflict with the global imperialist order dominated by the United States. Under Obama and now Trump, the US has begun using all means at its disposal to ensure its continued global hegemony. Trump’s economic war goes hand-in-hand with a military build-up in the Indo-Pacific, escalating naval provocations in the South China Sea, under the guise of “freedom of navigation operations, and more open preparations for a war between the two nuclear-armed powers.

The CCP leadership has no answer to the mounting danger of war, other than desperately seeking an accommodation with imperialism, while engaging in a frenetic arms race that can only end in catastrophe for the working class in China and internationally. Capitalist restoration, far from strengthening China’s capacity to counter the US, has greatly weakened it. The regime is organically incapable of making any appeal to the international working class, as that would inevitably lead to social struggles by the working class at home.

Having abandoned even its previous nominal commitment to socialism and internationalism, the CCP has increasingly relied on whipping up Chinese nationalism to try to create a social base in layers of the middle class. There is nothing progressive about Chinese chauvinism and patriotism, which divides Chinese workers from their class brothers and sisters internationally, and within China from non-Han Chinese minorities. Its repressive measures against Uighurs, Tibetans and other ethnic groups have provided an opening that the US is seeking to exploit. Under the bogus banner of “human rights,” Washington is promoting separatist groups as part of its ambition to fracture and subordinate China to its interests.

Thirty years after the Tiananmen Square massacre, the CCP leadership is terrified of a renewal of working-class opposition, the first stirrings of which have been seen in the more numerous reports of workers’ strikes

and protests, and, significantly over the past year, in a turn by a layer of university students to assist workers in their struggles. Since 1989, the working class in China has vastly expanded to an estimated 400 million and as a proportion of the population. One indicator is the growth of the country's urban population from just 26.4 percent of the total in 1990, to 58.5 percent in 2017.

The CCP leadership boasts of having lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty, using the UN's very austere measures of poverty. Such benchmarks ignore the many factors that are fueling discontent among workers, including the common practice of late or unpaid wages, unhealthy and dangerous factory conditions, harsh corporate disciplinary practices, and the lack of basic social rights for tens of millions of internal migrants in the cities. All of these oppressive conditions are monitored and policed by the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, which functions as an arm of the CCP bureaucracy in workplaces.

Capitalist restoration has produced a dramatic rise in social inequality: from one of the most equal societies in the world, China has become one of the most unequal countries. It is home to more dollar billionaires than any other country except the United States. While Chinese workers struggle to survive on the minimum wage of \$370 a month, the wealthiest individual, Tencent chairman Pony Ma, has a personal fortune of almost \$40 billion. These super-rich oligarchs, who in many cases have built their fortunes through naked corruption and the looting of state-owned property, are represented in the Chinese Communist Party and sit on powerful advisory bodies.

The gulf between the super-rich and the vast majority of the workers and the poor is generating huge social tensions that, sooner rather than later, will explode on a scale that will eclipse the rebellion by workers and students 30 years ago. The lesson drawn by the Stalinist leadership from the 1989 events was that it had to suppress, through all available means, any expression of opposition that could become the focus of a broader movement against the regime. Incapable of meeting the pressing social needs of the majority of the population, the CCP has vastly expanded its police-state apparatus, now spending more each year on its internal security forces than it does on external defence.

The working class must also draw the necessary political lessons from the defeat of that movement in 1989, which was rapidly assuming revolutionary dimensions. What was lacking was not determination, audacity and courage, nor numbers, which were rapidly swelling across China, but the essential problem facing the international working class in the 20th century—the absence of revolutionary leadership.

James Cogan summed up the issue in his analysis “Ten years since the Tiananmen Square massacre,” stating:

Inexperienced politically and lacking a political perspective outside of opposition to the existing regime, the workers' leaders advanced no alternative to, and deferred to, the student bodies. The workers of China knew in their life experience what they were against—Stalinism and capitalism—but they were not able to articulate any perspective for an alternative social order.

Decades of domination by Stalinism and the active suppression of genuine Marxism in China meant there was no revolutionary socialist, that is, Trotskyist, tendency in the working class. No organisation within the country could spontaneously advance the program that was implicit in the actions and sentiments of the Chinese working class—a political revolution to overthrow the Stalinist regime and introduce major reforms into the economy for the benefit of the working class. [8]

Chinese working class as a section of the International Committee of the Fourth International remains. None of the oppositional tendencies that emerged out of the 1989 protests offer a viable political perspective for the working class. Advocates of independent trade unions such as Han Dongfang, who was prominent in the Beijing Workers Autonomous Federation in 1989, have underscored the political bankruptcy of syndicalism by lurching to the right and into the arms of US trade union apparatus, in other words of US imperialism.

A layer of youth, intellectuals and workers have turned to Maoism, and its banal “revolutionary” slogans, for answers. Capitalist restoration in China, however, was not a break from Maoism. It flowed organically out of the dead-end of “socialism in one country.” Maoism could aptly be termed Stalinism with Chinese characteristics, with its hostility to the working class, its emphasis on subjective will, and above all its putrid nationalism. It is diametrically opposed to genuine Marxism, that is the perspective of socialist internationalism, which alone was upheld by the Trotskyist movement, including the Chinese Trotskyists.

The establishment of a genuinely revolutionary party in China, as part of the ICFI, requires the assimilation of the essential strategic experiences of the international working class, of which the Chinese revolutions of the 20th century are a critical component. The CCP leaders are petrified that workers and youth will begin to work over the lessons of history. They attempt to censor and black out any knowledge and discussion of the events of 1989, and continue to perpetrate the lies of Stalinism about the course of the 20th century.

The crucial political lessons of the protracted struggle of Trotskyism against Stalinism are embedded in the program, perspective and documents of the International Committee of the Fourth International. Workers and youth should make a serious study of the political issues involved, beginning with the documents of the ICFI on the Tiananmen Square massacre, republished this week on the *World Socialist Web Site*. We urge you to contact the International Committee of the Fourth International, which is the first step toward forging a Trotskyist leadership in the Chinese working class.

Footnotes:

[1] Cited in “Workers in the Tiananmen protests: The politics of the Beijing Workers Autonomous Federation,” by Andrew G. Walder and Gong Xiaoxia, first published in the *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, No 29, January 1993.

[2] *The World Capitalist Crisis and the Tasks of the Fourth International: Perspectives Resolution of the International Committee of the Fourth International*, August 1988, Labor Publications, pp.30–31.

[3] Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic*, The Free Press, Third edition, 1999, p.508.

[4] *ibid*, p.389.

[5] Michael Marti, *China and the Legacy of Deng Xiaoping: From Communist Revolution to Capitalist Evolution*, Brassey's Inc, 2002, pp.47–48.

[6] Cited in John Chan, “Twenty years since Deng Xiaoping's ‘Southern tour’—Part 1”, 26 November 2012.

[7] Cited in John Chan, “Twenty years since Deng Xiaoping's ‘Southern tour’—Part 2”, 27 November 2012.

[8] James Cogan, “Ten years since the Tiananmen Square massacre: Political lessons for the working class,” 4 June 1999.



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The essential political task of building a Trotskyist leadership in the