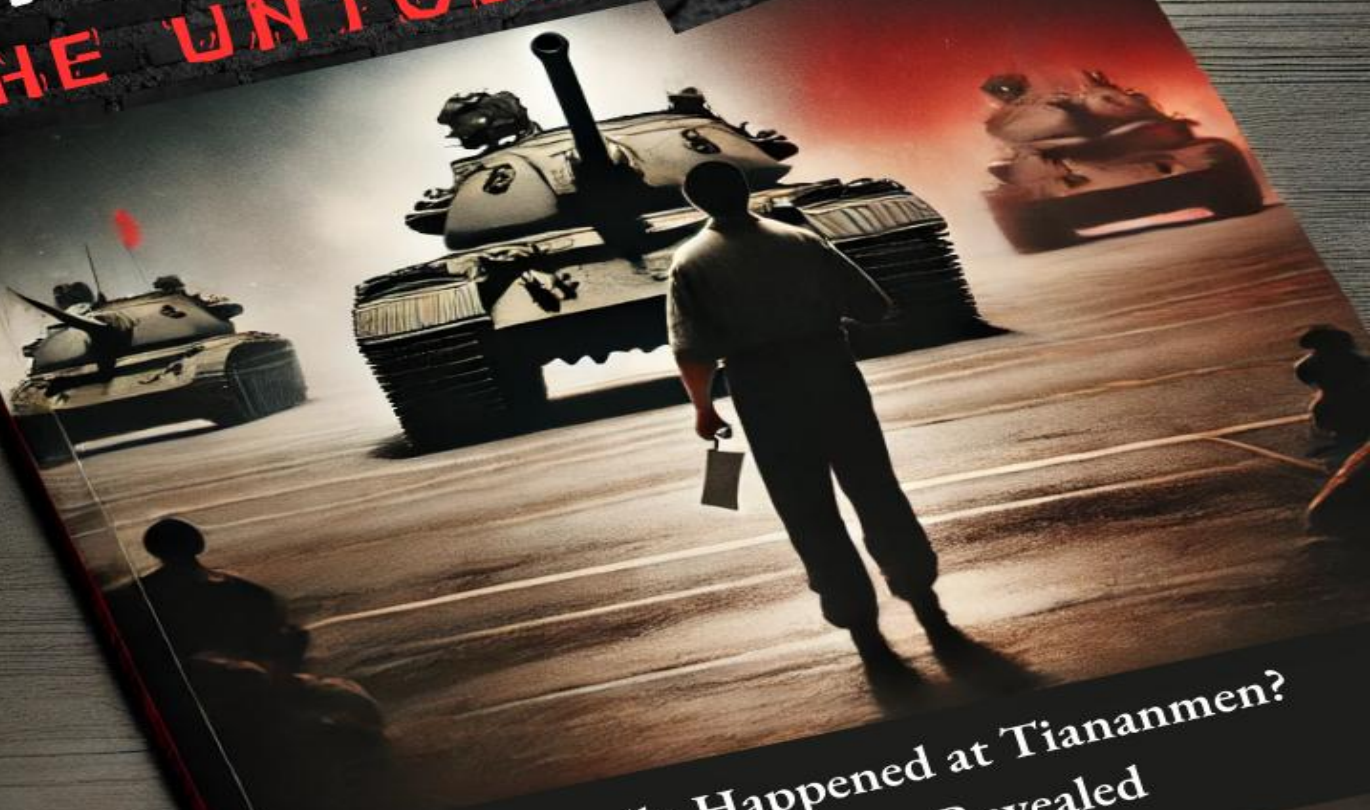


# TIANANMEN 1989

## THE UNTOLD TRUTH



What Really Happened at Tiananmen?  
The Full Story Revealed

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# What Really Happened at Tiananmen? The Full Story Revealed

## Global Newspaper Headlines from June 1989

During the aftermath of the **Tiananmen Square Massacre (June 3-4, 1989)**, newspapers around the world captured the **horrors of the crackdown**, the **courage of the protesters**, and the **brutality of the Chinese regime**. Some of the most striking headlines included:

### United States & Western Media

- 📰 *The New York Times*: "Blood Flows in Beijing as Army Crushes Protesters"
- 📰 *The Washington Post*: "China's Democracy Movement Ends in Massacre"
- 📰 *The Guardian (UK)*: "Tanks Roll Over Protesters in Tiananmen Square"
- 📰 *The Times (UK)*: "China's Night of Terror: Thousands Feared Dead"
- 📰 *TIME Magazine*: "The Death of a Dream: China's Youth Massacred"

### Asia-Pacific & Global Coverage

- 📰 *The Japan Times*: "Beijing Burns: China's Army Opens Fire on Its Own People"
- 📰 *The South China Morning Post (Hong Kong)*: "Gunfire and Chaos: Streets of Beijing Turn Red"
- 📰 *The Sydney Morning Herald*: "Tiananmen Massacre: A Nation Silenced in Blood"
- 📰 *The Straits Times (Singapore)*: "China in Crisis: Brutality Shocks the World"

### China's State-Controlled Response

- 📰 *People's Daily (China, June 5, 1989)*: "Martial Law Restores Order, Criminals Dealt With"
- 📰 *Xinhua News Agency*: "Counterrevolutionary Riots Suppressed, Stability Returns"

While the **Chinese government** framed the massacre as a "necessary action" to maintain order, **Western and independent Asian media** exposed the brutal truth—a massacre that left an **unknown number of students, workers, and civilians** dead.

More than three decades later, the **Chinese Communist Party (CCP)** continues to censor and erase the **memory of Tiananmen**, but the **images of tanks, bloodied streets, and the defiant "Tank Man"** remain symbols of resistance against authoritarian rule.





## Brewing Movements in April: The Prelude to Tiananmen

### April 15: The Death of Hu Yaobang Sparks Mourning

Former Communist Party chief **Hu Yaobang**, a symbol of **anti-corruption** and **political reform**, dies of a heart attack at the age of **73**. Thousands of mourners gather in **Beijing's Tiananmen Square**, invoking his legacy to demand **press freedom** and **political reforms**.

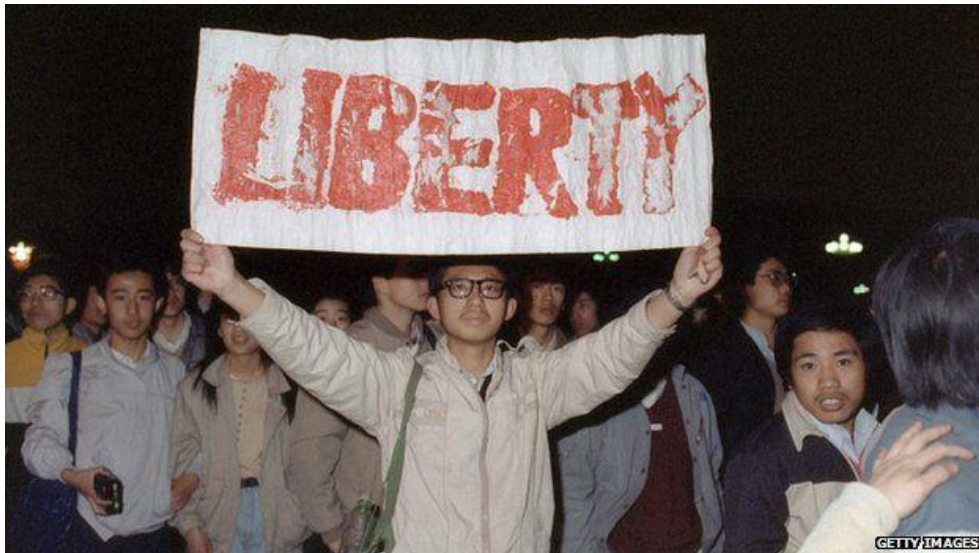
### April 18 - 21: Protests Gain Momentum

What begins as a vigil quickly escalates into mass **demonstrations** across **Beijing**, **other cities**, and **university campuses**. Students, workers, and government officials chant slogans demanding:

- **Greater democracy and political freedom**
- **An end to dictatorship**
- **Relief from inflation, low wages, and poor housing conditions**

By **April 22**, an estimated **200,000 protesters** flood **Tiananmen Square** to participate in **Hu Yaobang's funeral ceremony**, despite the demonstration being **unauthorized**.





*Figure 1 An editorial in the People's Daily newspaper further fuels public anger*

#### **April 22: Hu's Memorial and the Formation of Student Unions**

More than **15,000 students** assemble outside the **Great Hall of the People** as **Hu's memorial service** takes place. They present a **petition of demands**, seeking a meeting with **Premier Li Peng**, which is swiftly **rejected**.

In response, students **boycott classes** and **form unofficial student unions**, a move that is deemed **illegal** under Chinese law.

#### **April 25: The Party Calls for Action**

**Deng Xiaoping**, China's **de facto leader**, declares that the government has been "**tolerant and restrained**", but it is time to **crack down on the turmoil**.



*Figure 2 Deng Xiaoping leader of China*

#### **April 26: The People's Daily Labels Protesters as 'Disturbers'**

The **state-run People's Daily** publishes a strongly worded editorial, accusing demonstrators of **spreading rumors, inciting violence, and undermining party leadership**. The article states:

*"An extremely small number of people spread rumors, attacked party and state leaders by name, and instigated the masses to break into the Xinhua Gate at Zhongnanhai... Some even shouted, 'Down with the Communist Party'..."*

This **hardline stance** by the **Chinese Communist Party (CCP)** triggers **even larger demonstrations** across China, setting the stage for what will become one of the **largest pro-democracy movements in Communist China's history**—culminating in the **Tiananmen Square Massacre**.

## **Movement escalating in May and June**

### **May 4: Students Commemorate the May Fourth Movement**

Tens of thousands of students march into **Tiananmen Square** to mark the **70th anniversary of the May Fourth Movement**, an intellectual and nationalist uprising in 1919 that called for a stronger China.

- **Zhao Ziyang**, the General Secretary of the Communist Party, praises the students' "patriotism" in a speech to foreign bankers, **contradicting the government's hardline stance** from the **April 26** editorial.
- His remarks anger **senior Party leaders**, further deepening internal divisions.

### **May 13: The Hunger Strike Begins**

Ahead of Soviet leader **Mikhail Gorbachev's** historic visit, **hundreds of students** declare an **indefinite hunger strike** in **Tiananmen Square** to pressure the government for **political reforms**.



*Figure 3 Indefinite hunger strike in Tiananmen Square*

- They blame their **extreme action** on the government's **refusal to engage in dialogue**.
- The strike **gains widespread public support**, with prominent intellectuals pledging their solidarity.
- As journalist **Jan Wong** observed:

*"There's such a feeling in China about food because of the thousands of years of famines they've had. When the students went on their hunger strike, it really moved people to tears."*



### May 15: Gorbachev's Visit and Political Embarrassment

Soviet leader **Mikhail Gorbachev** arrives in Beijing for the first **Sino-Soviet summit** since 1959.



*Figure 4 Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, right, arrived in Beijing in May 1989*

- The hunger strike **forces Chinese authorities to cancel his official welcome ceremony in Tiananmen Square**, causing **global embarrassment** for the regime.
- Protesters **block his escort** on major streets, further **humiliating** the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

### May 19: Zhao Ziyang's Final Plea

As protests continue, **Zhao Ziyang** visits Tiananmen Square in a last attempt to **negotiate with students**. Accompanied by:



*Figure 5 Zhao Ziyang, centre, did not succeed in his appeal for a compromise*

- **Li Peng**, his **hardline rival**
- **Wen Jiabao**, the future **Premier of China**

**Zhao**, who had pushed for political reforms, is in tears as he tells the students:

*"We have come too late."*

This visit marks the **last time Zhao Ziyang is seen in public**. His **political career effectively ends**, and he is later placed under **house arrest** for the remainder of his life.

### **May 20: Martial Law Declared**

The Chinese government **declares martial law** in **several districts of Beijing**. **Troops and armored vehicles** begin moving toward the city center.



*Figure 6 Red Army soldiers in a transport arrive at Tiananmen Square during the protests of 1989*

- However, **massive civilian resistance** blocks military convoys.
- Protesters set up **barricades** across streets, forcing the troops to retreat temporarily.

### **May 22: Military Issues Evacuation Orders**

A **military helicopter** drops leaflets ordering protesters to **vacate Tiananmen Square immediately**.

- Protesters **defy orders**, using **buses and barricades** to block military access routes.
- The city turns into an **obstacle course**, preventing troop movement.





*Figure 7 A military helicopter drops leaflets above Tiananmen Square which state that the student protesters should leave the Square as soon as possible, on May 22, 1989*



*Figure 8 Buses are used by sympathizers to Beijing university students occupying Tiananmen Square to secure the city from government troops, May 22, 1989. Streets into and out of the city have been turned into obstacle courses. (AP Photo/Mark Avery)*

### **May 24 – June 2: A Moment of Celebration Before the Storm**

Despite **martial law**, demonstrations continue **without visible military intervention**.

- **Tiananmen Square turns into a vibrant hub of resistance**, filled with speeches, music, and student-led assemblies.
- Protesters erect a **25-foot "Goddess of Democracy" statue**, inspired by the **Statue of Liberty**, as a **symbol of defiance**.
- **Communist Party elders secretly approve the decision to crush the movement by force**.





*Figure 9 Students rest in the litter of Tiananmen Square, May 28, 1989, in Beijing, as their strike for government reform enters its third week.*



*Figure 10 Demonstrators gather around a replica of the Statue of Liberty, defying the declaration of martial law and orders to leave the square.*



### June 3: The Crackdown Begins

As **hundreds of thousands of troops** move in from **all directions**, Beijing residents **flood the streets** in a desperate attempt to block them.



Figure 11 A student tells soldiers to leave on June 3, shortly before the crackdown.

- **Barricades** go up at every major intersection.
- At **10:30 PM**, near **Muxidi**, an area housing high-ranking Party officials, **tensions escalate**:
  - Protesters **throw rocks** and **set buses on fire**.
  - Soldiers respond with **live ammunition**, firing into **unarmed crowds**.
  - **AK-47s loaded with battlefield rounds** tear through the streets.
- **Eyewitness accounts describe mass casualties**:
  - Human rights observer **Timothy Brook** recalls:

*“The first rounds of fire caught everybody by surprise. The people in the streets didn’t expect this to happen.”*

- With hospitals **overwhelmed and unequipped**, many of the wounded are **carried away on bicycles and pull-carts**.
- **Muxidi sees the highest casualties of the night**, with an **untold number of deaths**.





Figure 12 On the night of June 3, troops began to move against the protesters with tanks and armoured vehicles. Students set an armoured personnel carrier on fire.

### The Road to June 4: The Bloodiest Night Still to Come

The **Tiananmen Square protests** had begun as a **peaceful student movement**, but by the night of **June 3**, Beijing had **turned into a war zone**. The **full-scale massacre** was about to unfold.

### June 4, 1989: The Massacre Unfolds

#### Eyewitness Account: “Pop, Pop, Pop” – The Bullets Rained Down

*“The soldiers opened fire on us with semi-automatic weapons. They shot at people who had no weapons, no rocks, no bricks. The crowd’s anger erupted, and everyone in the alley shouted in unison: ‘Down with the fascists! Down with [Premier] Li Peng!’”*

*“Pop, pop, pop.” The bullets flew at us. We stopped roaring, trying not to get hit. I saw injured people being carried to the back of the alley. Some young men found a cart and rushed them to the nearest hospital.”*

#### The Assault on Tiananmen Square

In the early hours of **June 4, 1989**, **Chinese troops and security forces stormed through Tiananmen Square**, opening fire indiscriminately on protesters.

- Chaos erupted as **tens of thousands of students** tried to flee.
- Some **fought back**, hurling stones at the soldiers and overturning military vehicles, which were then set ablaze.
- Others were **gunned down in the streets** as they attempted to escape.

### Tank Pursuit: A Brutal Chase

At around **6:00 AM**, a **convoy of students** who had evacuated Tiananmen Square was marching westward along **Chang'an Avenue**, returning to their campus.

- **Three tanks pursued them from the Square, firing tear gas.**
- Suddenly, **one of the tanks plowed through the crowd**, crushing **at least 11 students** and injuring many more.

### Parents Shot in the Back

Later in the morning, **thousands of civilians**, including **parents of student protesters**, attempted to **re-enter Tiananmen Square** via **East Chang'an Avenue**, but were **blocked by infantry troops**.

- As they approached, an **officer issued a warning**.
- **Moments later, the troops opened fire.**
- **Dozens were shot in the back as they fled**, their bodies collapsing onto the pavement in full view of foreign journalists at the **Beijing Hotel**.

### Desperate Attempts to Reclaim the Square

Determined, the **crowds surged forward again**, only to face **another round of gunfire**.

- In the **ensuing panic**, an **ambulance trying to rescue the wounded** was also **caught in the crossfire**.
- Several more attempts were made to **break through**, but the troops held their ground.

Tiananmen Square was **sealed off from the public for two weeks**, marking the end of the largest pro-democracy protest in China's history.

### Global Outrage: Shockwaves Across the World

The **brutal crackdown on Tiananmen Square** sent shockwaves through the international community, **condemned by both allies and adversaries of China**.

### Soviet Disapproval

Even the **Soviet Union**, China's former communist ally, was taken aback. **Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev expressed deep sorrow** over the events and urged China to embrace **political reforms** similar to his own **glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring)**.

### U.S. Reaction: Calls for Punishment

In the **United States**, the **Tiananmen Square massacre** was met with fierce condemnation.

- **Editorialists and lawmakers denounced the bloodshed**, calling for **concrete actions against the Chinese government**.
- **President George H.W. Bush** faced intense pressure to respond forcefully.
- **Three weeks later, the U.S. Congress voted to impose economic sanctions on China**, citing **gross human rights violations**.

The global outrage highlighted **China's brutal suppression of dissent** and intensified **demands for accountability**—though Beijing remained **defiant**, insisting that the crackdown was necessary to restore order.

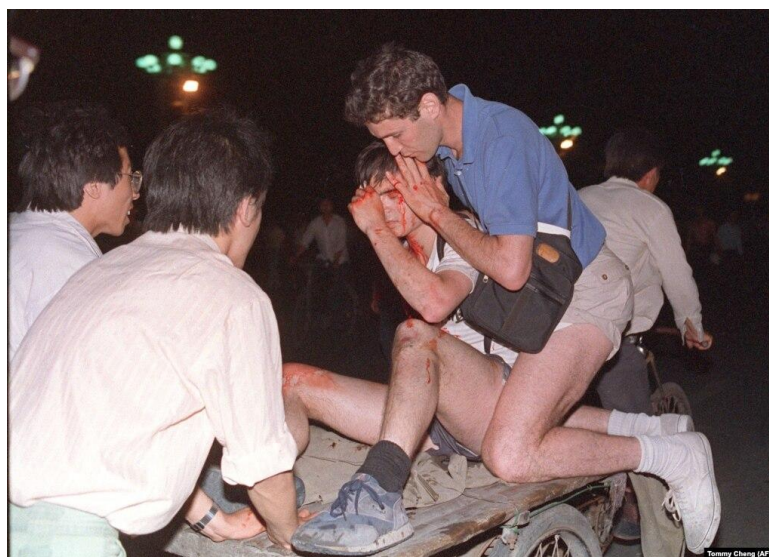




*Figure 13 Democracy Revolutionaries fighting back when the army opened fire on the civilians*



*Figure 14 A Beijing resident shows a slug from an automatic rifle that pierced the window of his apartment*



*Figure 15 Foreign Journalists covering the massacre got hit by bullets*



*Figure 16 The bodies of dead civilians lie among mangled bicycles near Beijing's Tiananmen Square early June 4, 1989. Tanks and soldiers stormed the area overnight, bringing a violent end to student demonstrations for democratic reform in China. (AP Photo)*

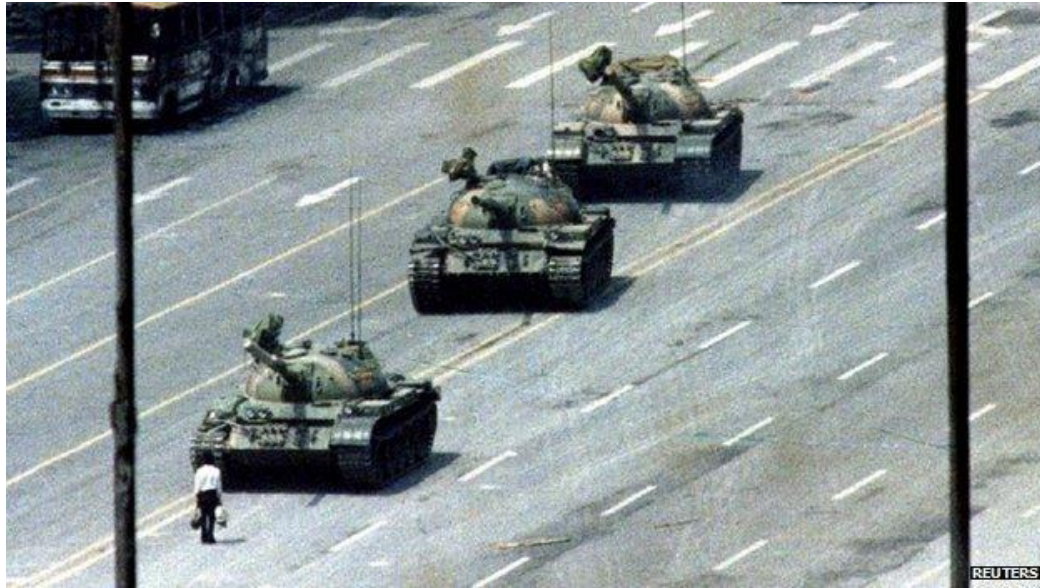


*Figure 17 A blood-covered protester holds a Chinese soldier's helmet following violent clashes with military forces*

### **Tank Man: A Symbol of Defiance and Strength**

On **June 5, 1989**, with the Chinese military in full control of **Beijing**, the world witnessed an **unforgettable act of defiance**—an unarmed man standing in the path of a column of **tanks** on **Chang'an Avenue**, blocking their advance towards **Tiananmen Square**.





*Figure 18 This image, of a lone man in front of tanks, is now known around the world*

### **A Mystery That Endures**

To this day, the identity of the **Tank Man** and his ultimate fate remain **unknown**. Was he arrested? Did he survive? The Chinese government has never provided answers, and his act of **courageous resistance** remains **one of the most iconic images of the 20th century**.

### **Post-Crackdown: China's Justification**

On **June 9, 1989**, China's **paramount leader, Deng Xiaoping**, made his first public appearance since the **massacre**, addressing military officers. He **praised the army** for quelling the protests and **blamed the unrest on so-called "counter-revolutionaries"** who, he claimed, sought to **overthrow communism**.

### **The Legacy Lives On**

Although the movement was crushed and **Tiananmen Square was forcibly cleared**, the **spirit of the 1989 pro-democracy movement endures**. The students who stood against oppression remain **heroes in the hearts of millions**, a reminder that the fight for freedom can never truly be erased.