

Four: Villain Holding Sway

1: Support For The Massacre Won Him The Throne



On April 25, the CCP's Central Committee in a People's Daily editorial, condemned students' actions as turmoil, and stated they disturbed social order. The students were further upset. On May 13, the students went on a hunger strike in Tian An Men Sq. to call for the retraction of the editorial, and a dialogue between the government and the students. Meanwhile, thousands of Beijing's civilians, government officials and journalists poured into the streets to support the students.



The strong-armed handling of the Herold incident by Jiang Ze-min and his cohorts triggered media protests that shook Shanghai, and quickly spread throughout the entire nation, breeding almost overnight a firestorm. Zhao Ziyang frankly offered that since the Herold incident was started by Shanghai City Council, it should be ended by Shanghai City Council. His open criticism of Jiang Zemin, who was by then favored by Chen Yun and Li Xiannian, angered some senior Party's bosses.



Jiang Ze-min in a state of panic called Li Rui, who was the Executive Vice-Minister of the CCP Central Organization Ministry. Jiang Zemin begged him to speak to his connections on Jiang Zemin's behalf and to inquire about the state of things there. Jiang Zemin's closest associate, Chen Zhili, told him: "If the Central Government asks who is responsible, I'd say it's all me. You won't be implicated." When Jiang Ze-min found out that the

opinions of the Central Committee's elder bosses were different from that of Zhao Ziyang, he felt relief.



The CCP decided to crackdown the student movement. Although Zhao Ziyang was the Party's General Secretary, he could not stop the bloodshed. Early in the morning on May 19, he went Tian An Men Sq. to meet the students who were on hunger strike. He was in tears.



Around midnight, Premier Li Peng declared martial law in Tian An Men Sq. Jiang Zemin had been waiting for this. He quickly expressed firm support for the Central Committee's decision in a telegram in plain language. the timely gesture was made before any other provincial or city leaders had responded. Making for an effect similar to when Jiang Zemin delivered the

cake to Li Xiannian. his declaration, to be sure, gave Party elders the sense that we had found the reliable successor.



Deng Xiaoping secretly called Jiang Ze-min to Beijing on May 21. Not knowing what to expect, Jiang Ze-min anxiously went meet with Deng. to his surprise, Deng praised his handling of the Herold, and stated that Shanghai did a much better job than Beijing at receiving Gorbachev. And then Deng Xiaoping told him that there was another critical task to be handled. Jiang Zemin was quite relieved.



Deng asked Jiang Zemin to detain Wan Li, Chairman of the People's Congress, who was on a state visit to Canada at the time and would return to China earlier than scheduled. Deng had changed Wan Li's flight route for him to land in Shanghai rather than Beijing. Jiang Zemin's task was to force

Wan Li to support the decision of the Party's elders. If Wan Li failed to do so he wouldn't be allowed to return to Beijing.



Jiang Zemin understood perfectly the importance of the matter. The Party's testing him. It would be a decisive turning point of his political career. Jiang Zemin put Wan Li under house arrest presenting him with Deng's personal letter and forced him on May 27, days later, finally announced publicly that he agreed with the Central Committee's order to enact martial law. Jiang Zemin had cleared away the last obstacle in advance of the Tian An Men Massacre.



On that same day, May 27, Deng Xiaoping organized a meeting with eight senior Party bosses meant to decide upon the candidate for the position of the General Secretary. Early on, Deng Xiaoping had nominated Qiao Shi

and Li Ruihuan, but Chen Yun had advocated strongly for Jiang Zemin. Li Xiannian and Bo Yibo played a pivotal role in Deng's switching to Jiang Zemin. Li Xiannian had argued that although Jiang Zemin lacked experience in Central Committee his Party spirit was strong.



May 30, Jiang Zemin was again ordered to Beijing. Chen Yun said to him that Deng Xiaoping decided “you’d replace Zhao Ziyang”. Then Li Xiannian said the decision was made based on Deng Xiaoping’s wish, ” he’ll surely talk to you again”. Jiang Zemin followed Zeng Qinghong’s advice to listen more and talk less. He thus responded with only brief answers preferring to give merely a slight bow lowering his head in a gesture of acknowledgment.



Returning to his room, Jiang Zemin quickly made three phone calls. The

first was for Zeng Qinghong. He said: "It doesn't look like I'll be returning". Zeng asked nervously: "Didn't you plan to on returning in a couple of days?" Jiang Zemin responded: "I'm going to be working here. you should come here right away, tomorrow!" the second phone call was to the former Shanghai Mayor, Wang Daohan. Jiang Zemin said: "I'd like to have your support in the future." The third call was made to his wife, Wang Yeping, asking her to make preparations for a move to Beijing. His wife, however, uttered not a word.



Now that the final decision had been made, at eight o'clock in the evening, Li Peng, Yao Yilin, and others politely treated Jiang Zemin for dinner at the Great Hall of the People. Jiang Zemin felt like he was dreaming.



The appointed time at which the army was to enter Beijing had been delayed

several times, but the outcome was a foregone conclusion. As the newly appointed General Secretary, Jiang Zemin from the time of late May began reading and approving official documents. On June 1, a new plan was settled upon, then on the night of June 4, the CCP's field army with machine guns and tanks suppressed and massacred barehanded students and citizens.



Jiang Zemin was the key figure in the tragedy and the one who benefited most. Because of this he still wishes the date could be fully erased from people's minds. He had been scared to death that the verdict on the massacre and Zhao Ziyang would be reversed. When Jiang Zemin departed from his post as General Secretary and President of the State in 2002, he left the Standing Committee with several rules, one, tellingly, was to never reverse the judgment passed by the Party on the nature of the Tian An Men Massacre.