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CHINESE STUDIES ON CHINA

YAN JIAQI and CHINA'S STRUGGLE for DEMOCRACY

Translated and Edited by DAVID BACHMAN and DALI L. YANG

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Translated and Edited, with an Introduction, by **DAVID BACHMAN** and **DALI L. YANG**

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 1991 by M.E. Sharpe

Published 2015 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Yan Jiaqi and China's struggle for democracy / edited and translated, with an introductory essay, by David Bachman and Dali L. Yang.
p. cm. — (Chinese studies on China)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-87332-780-2. — ISBN 0-87332-781-0 (pbk.)
1. Yen, Chia-ch'i—Political and social views. 2. China—Politics and government—1949– 3. Democracy. I. Bachman, David M. II. Yang, Dali L. III. Series.
JC273.Y46Y36 1991
320'.092—dc20 90-9051
CIP

ISBN 13: 9780873327817 (pbk)

This volume was prepared under the auspices of the
CENTER OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
Princeton University

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Contents

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DAVID BACHMAN AND DALI L. YANG

Introduction: Yan Jiaqi and the Chinese Democracy Movement

The careers of reformers in contemporary Chinese politics have not been characterized by successes.[1] Over the course of the twentieth century, three types of reformers have sought to bring about reform in China. The first type is the foreign adviser.[2] Though significant in many ways, the foreigner as agent of change in China is not central to the discussion here.

A second type of reformer is that of the "outsider" to the existing political system. The outsider invokes a moral critique of the existing regime, suggests ways that morality might be restored, demands fundamental changes in the system, and counts on the system to transform itself once its errors have been brought to its attention.[3] In the People's Republic of China, the outsider as reformer generally starts as political insider but gains, often reluctantly, his status as outsider because he is forced out of the system by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) for views the system is not prepared to tolerate. Sometimes the outsider reformers also engage in various social or economic experiments in an effort to demonstrate that theirs is the correct course for the nation.

Finally, the majority of reformers in China in recent years are those who occupy positions of authority in the existing system and attempt to influence the evolution of the political system from within. These insiders face formidable political constraints and obstacles; nonetheless, their experiences are no less a part of reform politics than are those of the outsiders.

For their bold criticisms, their often extreme degrees of courage in baldly stating the failings of the regime (knowing full well that the regime does not deal kindly with its critics), and their outspoken support for Western values, the outsider reformers have so far received the most attention among Western scholars and journalists. Their criticisms of the regime, showing above all their concern with the cultivation, elaboration, and development of alternative potentialities in an oppressive society, are seen as proof of their intellectual status, and appear similar to the tensions characterizing relations between intellectuals and power in the West.[4] These external critics are regarded, at home and abroad, as the intellectual keepers of social conscience.

In contrast, reformers working to change the system from within have received much less attention, and are valued somewhat less by outside observers. Implicitly, they are seen as mere bureaucrats willing to compromise, not real "intellectuals" with a conscience. The compromises among integrity, influence, and access which insiders must make to retain their positions is felt no less clearly in Beijing than in Washington. To retain access, the insider must soften his criticisms, or "pull his punches." While speaking truth to power is a noble ideal, rarely in any government is it ever consistently followed by policy advisers. Yet this pressure to temper one's remarks may be so invidious that the adviser loses his sense of perspective, and remains mute too often.[5] Instead of a bold, comprehensive moral critique, the insider must advocate change at the margins of policy developments, in an ad hoc manner, facing the formidable constraints imposed by political leaders who are opposed, for policy and personal reasons, to the proposed changes. If the outsider as reformer is the moral critic, the insider, to be effective, is and must be the politician. Even then, the insider as reformer may still be in a precarious position. Political leaders facing political trouble may turn on their advisers as scapegoats in efforts to retain their leadership positions. At that point, the insider has no choice but to take the outsider path to reform. Indeed, few are outsider reformers who have not expe-

rienced the agonies and frustrations of seeking to change the system from within.

Because the insider works within the rules of the political game, and because those rules in China still prescribe opaqueness about internal decision making, the role and activities of insiders as reformers are doubly difficult to determine. Not only do insiders use veiled rhetoric and adopt a compromise or consensus-building strategy of reform-mongering, which may seem quite trivial to outside observers, but the system still requires that much of its activity is privileged, and should therefore not be reported at all. Data limitations thus reinforce the relative lack of attention to the careers of insiders.

Until he broke with the CCP in May 1989, Yan Jiaqi, China's foremost political scientist, was a reformer largely working within the existing structure of power in China. Yan's political personality had outsider elements to it, but arguably his influence was felt most strongly in Chinese think tanks and the centers of power. Since the Beijing Massacre of June 3–4, 1989, and the subsequent repression of the population, Yan has escaped from China, and, as president of the newly formed Front for a Democratic China (*Zhongguo minzhu zhenxian*), is one of the principal leaders of the opposition movement. Yan is no longer a reformer; he hopes for a democratic revolution. Not surprisingly, the CCP has denounced Yan and his writings, and no doubt would take extreme measures if he fell into the regime's hands.[6]

Yan Jiaqi is less well known to Westerners than are such dissident/opposition figures as Fang Lizhi, Liu Binyan, and Su Shaozhi.[7] Partly this is because Fang, Liu, and Su were forced to become outsiders earlier than was Yan.[8] Partly this is because the latter figures have had more of their work translated into English. Fang Lizhi's blunt outspokenness captured the interest of foreign reporters and academics. The literary quality and poignancy of the works of Liu Binyan and Wang Ruoshui, another prominent dissident, which forced readers in China and the West alike to confront the nature of communist rule on several levels, attracted much attention.[9] Even Su Shaozhi, whose role in the political

system and the reform process most nearly resembles Yan Jiaqi's, was much better known than Yan because of Su's ambitious attempt to redefine Marxism (reformist Marxism with Chinese characteristics) in order to provide the basis for reform in China.[10]

If Yan Jiaqi was not well known to the public in the West prior to the Beijing Massacre, he was well known in China. Yan and Gao Gao's (his wife) book *"Wenhua da geming" shinian shi* (A History of the Ten-Year "Cultural Revolution") was a cause célèbre in China, as conservatives tried to suppress the work, the first extensive history of the period to be published in China. It sold 800,000 copies on the mainland alone, and has been published in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and translated into Japanese, Korean, and English. Another one of Yan's books, *Shounao lun* (On Heads of State), ran through six printings and 310,000 copies on mainland China alone. It was a best seller and won a number of prizes on both the mainland and Taiwan.[11] In short, prior to his flight into exile, Yan Jiaqi, author or coauthor of ten books, was a widely read and highly influential reformist intellectual, and one who was closer to the centers of power than were other better known dissident/reformers.

I

Yan Jiaqi was born on Christmas Day, 1942, in Jiangsu Province.[12] In 1959, he entered the newly founded Chinese University of Science and Technology, where Fang Lizhi, six years Yan's senior, had just started teaching. He majored in basic particle physics, graduating in 1964. But Yan's career as a natural scientist ended before it began.

After the disastrous Great Leap Forward of 1958–60, the Chinese leadership returned to a more conventional Leninist approach to economic development. These and other developments increasingly distressed Mao Zedong and his allies. One of Mao's efforts to return the political and economic systems to a path he was more comfortable with was to launch a series of philosophi-

cal debates on the general issue of the relationship between "idea" and "existence." The most important aspect of the debates concerned the question of whether "two combined into one" or "one divided into two." Mao saw this seemingly arcane aspect of dialectics as crucial. If the two elements of a contradiction combined into one synthesis, then there was no point in struggle. Combination and integration were the fundamental processes of life and development. But if Mao's position, one divided into two, prevailed, then struggle was a constant. There was no such thing as stability. Flux was the basic aspect of existence.[13]

Whether Yan was aware of the broader political implications of the on-going debates on philosophy in the early 1960s is unclear. These discussions did capture Yan's attention, and in late 1963 and early 1964, he published two essays on dialectics, one in *Renmin ribao* (People's Daily), the official CCP newspaper. It was not a small achievement for a college student to be published in the official national paper, and Yan's essays attracted the interest of Yu Guangyuan, then the director of the science section in the party Propaganda Department and a senior research fellow in the Institute of Philosophy of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.[14] Yu encouraged Yan to apply for postgraduate work in philosophy in the Philosophy and Social Sciences Division of the Academy of Sciences. Yan obliged and was successful in the graduate entrance examinations.

Upon admission, Yan studied with Yu and Gong Yuzhi,[15] focusing on the dialectics of nature. How much studying he did, however, is open to question as Yan was almost immediately dispatched to rural areas in Hubei and Beijing to take part in the ongoing campaigns in the countryside. At the end of May 1966, Yan returned from the countryside to Beijing as the Cultural Revolution (CR) was erupting. Mao and his allies had just removed the mayor of Beijing, Peng Zhen, from power, but the mass demonstrations and the formation of the Red Guards characteristic of the CR had not yet developed.

For the twenty-three-year-old Yan, as with millions of his

countrymen and women, the CR was a profoundly shaping experience, though Yan appears to have survived the "ten years of turmoil" relatively unscathed. Upon his return to Beijing, Yan was assigned to an editorial committee compiling a work entitled *Quotations on War and Revolution*, containing excerpts from the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, and Lin Biao, the commander of the Chinese army. As Yan noted in later years, his return to Beijing in May 1966 marked a move from the "kingdom of philosophy to the kingdom of theology" (i.e., the Mao cult).

Yan's assignment to the editorial committee reflected political trust placed in him and his colleagues. The social and political turmoil into which Mao had plunged China during the CR soon led Yan to question the established Maoist orthodoxies, though he could not express his questioning in public. From 1967 to 1971, Yan borrowed banned books from friends, reading widely in the areas of world history and biography, Western political theory, and pre-1949 Chinese history. These readings would form the basis for Yan's later works on comparative leadership and ideas on political reform. He was also a careful observer of what was going on and avidly collected the numerous pamphlets and booklets put out by Red Guard groups. This material would be the primary sources for his book on the CR.

In 1970, Yan was dispatched to a May Seventh Cadre School in Henan that housed colleagues from the Philosophy and Social Sciences Division for reform through labor. He and his wife returned to Beijing in 1972, after the fall of Lin Biao. During the next four years, Yan was occupied with two tasks. The first, apparently his official duty, was to study and write about energy and energy policy. With the rapid rise in world oil prices in 1973 and China's own surge in oil production, the Chinese leadership became increasingly concerned with energy issues. Yan's study (in collaboration with others), published by China's Science Press in 1976, thus filled an apparent need. In the meantime, drawing upon his broad readings, Yan was busy preparing a manuscript on "The Question of Political Systems in Socialist Theories."[16]

II

As with all Chinese citizens, Yan's work was interrupted by the tumultuous developments of 1976, culminating with Mao's death in September, and the arrest of Mao's closest followers, the Gang of Four, in October. China's widely respected premier, Zhou Enlai, had died in early January 1976. Seizing the political initiative, the radical Gang insisted that only minimal funeral arrangements be made for Zhou, leader of the moderate faction. Many Chinese people were widely affronted by the lack of respect paid to Zhou, and they used the traditional festival of *Qingming* (Pure Brightness), when Chinese pay respect to their ancestors, to honor Zhou's memory. Between March 25 and April 7, a series of spontaneous demonstrations burst forth throughout the country, with the ones in Beijing receiving the most attention. There, in what later became known as the April Fifth Movement, ordinary citizens in the thousands flocked to the Monument of the People's Heroes in Tiananmen Square to express their affection for Zhou and Deng Xiaoping and their anger at the Gang, and implicitly, Mao. For the short term, the demonstrators were suppressed, and Deng Xiaoping was blamed for the protests and purged, but for the longer term, this April Fifth Movement marked the political death knell for the Gang.

Yan Jiaqi was an avid chronicler of the mass movement in Beijing. He snapped photographs, copied poems, and recorded the activities of the people in Tiananmen Square. "On Tiananmen Square," Yan later wrote, "I breathed the fresh air of science and democracy that is lacking in the entire kingdom of theology."[17] Deeply moved by the spectacle of people power that was unfolding before his eyes, Yan, on the spot, resolved to write a history of the movement.

Not until after the fall of the Gang of Four was Yan able to begin writing his history of the April Fifth Movement. He spent most of the year from November 1976 to the end of 1977 tracking down and interviewing participants in the movement. But until late 1978, the April Fifth Movement was still branded a

counterrevolutionary incident, and Yan's work could not be published. As part of Deng Xiaoping's efforts to achieve preeminent power in late 1978, the "verdict" on the April Fifth Movement was reversed, and Yan, joining with several collaborators, published a small book entitled *A True Record of the April Fifth Movement* on the movement's third anniversary. As an indication of what was to come in his later studies, Yan and his collaborators called for "guaranteeing the people's rights of supervision over leading cadres at all levels."[18]

The year 1978 marked a watershed for China's philosophical circles. Beginning in May, an officially sanctioned discussion of "practice as the sole criterion of truth" unfolded, in connection with Deng Xiaoping's attempts to undermine the remaining Maoists in power.[19] Yan took part in these discussions and used his readings in comparative history and political theory to good advantage. Since the political and intellectual atmosphere was still far from ripe for direct discussions of political reform, Yan wrote a "philosophical short story," taking an imaginary trip in time to visit three legal courts. First he travelled to Italy in the seventeenth century to witness the trial of Galileo—the "court of religion." He then visited the eighteenth century French *philosophes*, to understand the "court of reason." Finally he traveled into China's future to visit the "court of practice." China's professional philosophers were unimpressed by Yan's thought exercise, but, when it was published in *Guangming ribao* (Illumination Daily), the newspaper aimed at China's intellectual readership, Yan's story drew broad support for its bold advocacy of the pursuit of truth, and was soon released in book form.[20]

One result of the growing intellectual ferment in China in 1978–79 was the establishment of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the resurrection of various social science disciplines. At a meeting in February 1979, emboldened by the meeting-room exchanges, Yan delivered a speech about the need to study the political systems of socialist states from the perspective of political science. Drawing on his studies done in the early 1970s, he advocated that the "lifetime tenure" system of leader-

ship in socialist states was incompatible with their nominal status as republics. Most of China's important social scientists were in the audience, and Yan's speech was widely praised.[21] After the meeting, Yan elaborated his thoughts on democracy in another story of time travel, visiting the court of Louis XIV, seventeenth-century England, and the United States in the future, where he had a discussion with a fictional president of the American Political Science Association, Richard Bruce. These discussions reinforced Yan's views on the need to establish fixed terms of office in socialist states, something that would be a major theme in Yan's writings over the next three years. Indeed, Yan's strong advocacy for limited terms of office so aroused the party ideologues that at least one investigation was made into Yan's political activities in this period.[22] Moreover, a number of Yan's speeches at this time found their way into "Democracy Wall" publications in late 1978 and early 1979. While Deng Xiaoping originally sanctioned the free expression taking place in Beijing in late 1978, when it was largely aimed at his political rivals, he cracked down on the democratic activists after he consolidated power, beginning in March 1979. Yan's participation in this movement may have put him at political risk.[23] But it was also in connection with his advocacy of limited tenure for China's leaders that Yan met Bao Tong, who was soon to become Zhao Ziyang's effective chief-of-staff.[24]

Throughout 1980, the Academy of Social Sciences laid the groundwork for the study of political science in China, which heretofore had not been part of university curricula, and had been seen as a "bourgeois" field of scholarship, not applicable to China.[25] By the end of the year, the Chinese Political Science Association was established, and Yan was elected one of its executive directors, though his primary affiliation continued to be with the Institute of Philosophy. Not until May 1982 was Yan, with the blessings of Yu Guangyuan, still one of China's leading social scientists, transferred to work in the provisional Institute of Political Science, where he was charged with preparatory work for the institute's formal establishment.

Yan Jiaqi was named director of the Institute of Political Science when it was formally established on July 6, 1985. At the age of forty-three, he was the youngest director of a research institute at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. As China's leading political scientist, he travelled widely abroad, meeting his counterparts in other nations. In the Hong Kong edition of Yan's intellectual biography, for example, Yan is pictured at the 1985 International Political Science Association meeting, as part of a group which included three presidents of the American Political Science Association, Philip Converse, Richard Fenno, and Aaron Wildavsky. Other pictures include Yan meeting with Ronald Reagan, Samuel Huntington (Harvard University political scientist), and Billy Graham (evangelical religious leader).

Despite what might be called the diplomatic aspects of his appointment as head of the institute, Yan continued to publish regularly. His controversial history of the Cultural Revolution appeared in 1986, as did his study of comparative leadership. In 1987, a book entitled *Quanli yu zhenli* (Power and Truth) containing a selection of Yan's shorter essays (from which a number of the translations in this volume originate) appeared. His intellectual autobiography was published in Hong Kong in 1988. In scarcely a decade's time, Yan had established one of the strongest publication records among the community of social scientists in China.

Perhaps equally important in light of later developments, in the fall of 1986, Yan was appointed one of four deputy directors in the Political Structure Reform Research Group of the party Central Committee, under the directorship of Bao Tong. The research center was one of the most important think tanks serving Hu Yaobang and later Zhao Ziyang and Yan's appointment to this body reportedly came at the direct instigation of Zhao and Bao Tong.[26] Yan's work in this body is not detailed. Although he could advocate his reform proposals in meetings and internal publications, he was effectively forbidden to publish his personal views on the reforms because of his insider status.

In early 1987, in the aftermath of Hu Yaobang's forced re-

moval from office for not combatting "bourgeois liberalization" sufficiently, Yan was under political fire. As the current regime argues:

> Yan Jiaqi was investigated by the department concerned [presumably the party Discipline Inspection Commission]. He immediately sought assistance from Bao Tong and wrote a letter to Bao to defend his mistakes. On March 20, Bao Tong wrote a report in the name of the Central Political Structural Reform Research Group to Zhao Ziyang, saying that Yan Jiaqi's problems that were being investigated were not true but "were just based on unfounded rumors," and saying that Yan Jiaqi "always observed discipline" [an indirect way of saying Yan was a CCP member] and should be kept in the political structural reform research group to continue his work "as usual." Comrade Zhao Ziyang immediately expressed agreement with this and wrote an instruction to the responsible [organ] concerned. Thus, Yan Jiaqi was shielded and kept in a key position.[27]

Despite his important work as an insider, Yan found his political work stifling, and yearned for the days when he could air his views more freely. While he was able to publish a number of provocative writings in 1986, the only significant piece of writing he published in 1987 was an official exegesis on the meaning of the separation of party and government (see Text 10 in this volume). Frustrated that his ideas for political reform were not adopted, let alone implemented, he wanted to be a scholar who could publish and exchange views with his foreign counterparts. True to his devotion to the right of critical thought, Yan resigned from the post of deputy director of the prestigious research group in late 1987.[28] It was an unusual move in a country where people prize political positions and the perquisites associated with them. In 1988, Yan spent the first two months of the year in the United States, much of the time at the University of Michigan.

Yan did not advocate limited terms of office just for others, but abided by this principle himself. In mid-1988, despite attempts by the academy leadership to persuade him to stay on and his popularity with colleagues, Yan decided not to seek reelection to the directorship of the Institute of Political Science after having served for

two terms. Against a background of rampant official corruption in the Chinese body politic, Yan's rather unconventional step was highly regarded in the Chinese intellectual community.

III

Mid-1988 marked the high point in reforms under Zhao Ziyang, and it is quite possible that Yan (despite his lack of high official position) was heavily involved with the formulation of political reform proposals that were seen by leading reformers as necessary ingredients to making economic reform work. In the fall of 1988, however, surging inflation and other economic difficulties forced a retreat from the deep, rapid price reforms that had just been attempted. Moreover, within the top leadership, Zhao Ziyang, CCP general secretary and prime mover behind the reforms, was gradually forced not to interfere in the economic realm. Instead, Premier Li Peng, widely regarded as a much more cautious and conservative figure, began to institute a full-fledged economic retrenchment program with the support of conservative forces within the party.

Yan and other reformers were very concerned by the retreat from price reform, fearing that it was a retreat from reform in general. Yan made his dissent with official policy known in a widely publicized discussion with another well-known reformer, Wen Yuankai, a professor at the Chinese University of Science and Technology (Yan's alma mater) in December 1988 (included here as Text 16). Yan and Wen both warned that unless the reforms continued, China would stagnate, just as the Soviet Union had under Leonid Brezhnev's rule (1964–82). Frankly critical of those who wished to retrench, Yan and Wen feared that General Secretary Zhao Ziyang would be removed from office through extralegal means by those who only sought power. This forceful criticism of the official policy of retrenchment and attacks on the motives of unnamed party figures would later be held against them by the current regime.[29]

Yan's dialogue with Wen Yuankai marked a turn in Yan's thinking. Impelled by a moral outrage at the Chinese leadership

and a strong sense of social obligation, Yan's role more clearly resembled that of a moral critic of the regime. He expounded on the lack of social justice in China and advocated that democratic politics is the politics of responsibility (see Texts 18 and 19). In a Tokyo interview that was widely printed in the overseas Chinese press, Yan, defying the authority of the Chinese Communist Party, argued that there should not be another government (that is, the Politburo) above the formal government. Instead, he called for the abolition of the Politburo.[30] Thus, at a time of impending social and political crises, Yan resolutely took up the intellectuals' duty to society that has long been sanctioned in Confucianism, rather than abiding by the discipline of the CCP.

On April 15, 1989, Hu Yaobang, former general secretary of the CCP, died of a heart attack, precipitating the student-government confrontation that culminated in the massacre. Yan was not actively involved in the early stages of the demonstrations, but sought to make his views known through the more reform-minded journals, such as *Shijie jingji daobao* (World Economic Herald) and *Xin guancha* (New Observer).[31] His words in April may have encouraged the students, or so the current regime claims.

On April 19, Yan argued at a forum sponsored by *Shijie jingji daobao* and *Xin guancha* that the protests about restoring Hu Yaobang's reputation were correct. He sensed that China was then in a situation that was similar to the one that precipitated the April Fifth Movement in 1976. Drawing on that parallel, he called on China's top leadership to heed the aspirations of the people. In a prophetic statement, Yan was reported as saying:

> At present the people's wish is very simple. Comrade [Hu] Yaobang was treated unjustly. If a correct appraisal is not made, problems may still arise. In 1976 we spoke up for Premier Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping and everyone did his bit, so that Deng Xiaoping was able to resume his duties. Today we place our hopes in the Party Center that, in the interests of the people and the future of the country and for the development of democracy, it will make a fair assessment of Yaobang. If it selflessly recognizes its errors, I feel China has prospects. If not, the old disastrous road lies ahead. I don't feel

> that China is hopeless, but on the contrary has great prospects. At Tiananmen Square I saw China's future and I saw the will of the people. The Chinese people's cohesion vis à vis the Chinese Communist Party is also evident.[32]

These and other statements were carried by the liberal *Shijie jingji daobao*. Copies of issue no. 439 carrying Yan's statement were subsequently banned from circulation by the Chinese government.

On April 21, at the urging of Bao Tong, Yan and Bao Zunxin, another reformist intellectual, wrote an open letter to the authorities praising the positive and democratic actions of the students. This, it is said, greatly inspired the students. He issued another open letter criticizing the banning of *Shijie jingji daobao*, and he apparently mobilized intellectuals to come to Zhao's aid.[33]

Yan was very excited by the changes in the media taking place under Zhao Ziyang and Bao Tong's auspices, including the lead article in the May 12 edition of *Renmin ribao* which praised human rights and checks and balances in the government structure. He had often articulated such a view, and may have contributed in some way to the article itself.[34] While a number of insiders expected this article and the authorized press freedom to end the student protests, they miscalculated. When in fact the protests grew, as student hunger strikers occupied Tiananmen Square on May 13, Yan sided with the people against Deng Xiaoping and Li Peng. He and a number of other intellectuals demanded that the authorities grant the students' demands on May 14, and this was broadcast and published on May 15.

On May 15, the day Mikhail Gorbachev arrived in China, Yan led China's intellectual circles, and in particular, a number of China's social scientists, in joining the student protestors. He penned the May 17 Declaration (Text 20), which demanded Deng Xiaoping's resignation, and the creation of democracy in China. While still supportive of Zhao, Yan had basically broken with the regime, as he saw the spirit of democracy he first witnessed in Tiananmen Square in 1976 revived and thriving in the