



The Tiananmen Papers

By Liang Zhang, Andrew J. Nathan, Perry Link, Orville Schell



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Just as the Pentagon Papers laid bare the secret American decision making behind the Vietnam War and changed forever our view of the nation's political leaders, so too has The Tiananmen Papers altered our perception of how and why the events of June 4 took the shape they did. Its publication has proven to be a landmark event in Chinese and world history.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Published to predictable international controversy, this sensational trove of documents, chronicling events leading up to, and following, the violent quashing of student protests in Tiananmen Square in June 1989, vividly details for the first time what previously had only been surmised. Zhang Liang, the pseudonym for the high-ranking Chinese official who leaked the documents, has revived the memory less to tell the truth than in a bid to advance political reform in China, which stalled as a result of Tiananmen Square. In that sense, the book is as much about hidden struggles now as it is about those in 1989. The Chinese government, unsurprisingly, has condemned it as "fabrication," and while a post-*Hitler Diaries* world is cautious, with experts admitting they cannot guarantee authenticity "with absolute authority," the feeling is that the records are largely credible.

What they reveal is the paranoia that gripped the Chinese rulers when the death of Hu Yaobang sparked public demonstrations that showed no signs of abating. The biggest villain appears to be former Premier Li Peng, the so-called "Butcher of Beijing," who conspires to bring about an aggressive end to the "turmoil." Yet it's Deng Xiaoping, who, although officially long retired, still wields the most power, as he and his fellow Elders intervene to enforce martial law. The moderate Zhao Ziyang favors negotiation and dialogue, but as a consequence is crushed and replaced by Jiang Zemin, the present leader, plucked from obscurity and appointed in defiance of procedure. The gripping scenario that unfolds, in compulsive detail, is akin to parents bickering over the best way to control unruly children, with carrot or stick.

Preceding a much longer Chinese edition, the American editors, Andrew J. Nathan and Perry Link, have performed their duties with acuity and flair, providing a lucid commentary to link the whistle-blowing government papers, minutes of meetings, speeches, eyewitness accounts, poster text, and foreign observations. *The Tiananmen Papers* affords a wide audience the opportunity to watch the drama unfold, blow by blow. It proves as brilliantly enthralling and explosive as a fictional thriller, allowing a rare snapshot of Chinese Communist Party factionalism in action. --David Vincent, *Amazon.co.uk*

From Publishers Weekly

Nathan, director of Columbia's East Asian Institute, terms this collection, "the richest record I have ever seen of political life in China at the top." Zhang Liang, a pseudonym, has provided Nathan and Link (a professor of Chinese at Princeton) with a voluminous number of transcripts of original materials, a portion of which appear in this volume (the entire collection of documents will be published in Chinese in the spring). They follow the deliberations and day-to-day conversations of China's most powerful leaders as they try to decide what to do about the increasingly vociferous and, to their minds, dangerous student-led demonstrations taking place in the spring of 1989, not only in Beijing but across the country. The major players here are the Politburo Standing Committee, a handful of officials at the top of the Party; a group of eight termed the "Elders," mostly retired officials of high standing to whom the Committee defers; and most importantly Deng Xiaoping, the now deceased "paramount leader" of China to whom all deferred. It is Deng who makes the final decision to use the military to clear Beijing's Tiananmen Square of demonstrators. We hear discussions in formal meetings, informal conversations, even telephone calls. We are also provided with documents from national and provincial security operations in China, as well as from the foreign press, which the leaders relied on to understand the situation with which they were dealing. The violent end of events was not a foregone conclusion--there were those who wished to placate the demonstrators, and we listen in on the factional struggle in which they lost out to more intolerant hard-liners. None seem to relish

the prospect of violence, but that is what happens, and from this unique revelation of the use of power in China--one of the most significant works of scholarship on China in decades--we understand the road to the bloody d, nouement of June 4, 1989. (Jan. 15)Forecast: As the importance of its contents deserves, this book, which is being released in a 30,000-copy first printing, is scheduled to receive major media attention: a front-page story in the New York Times and a segment on 60 Minutes (and first serialization in Foreign Affairs). Still, despite the editors' efforts to make this material readable by adding a narrative context for the documents, it remains dry and dense, and is probably not for the general reader but for those with a deep interest in China or in human rights

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About the Author

Andrew J. Nathan is professor of politics at Columbia University and the author of numerous books, including *China's Transition* (Columbia). He is a frequent contributor to *The New Republic*. **Perry Link** is professor of Chinese language and literature at Princeton University. In 1988-89 he served as Beijing director of a subcommittee of the National Academy of Sciences. He is the author of many books, including *Evening Chats in Beijing: Probing China's Predicament*(Norton). **Orville Schell**, dean of graduate studies in journalism at the University of California, Berkeley, is considered one of America's foremost experts on China. His most recent book on contemporary China is *The China Reader: the Reform Era* (Vintage).

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