

SARS HERO'S CALL FOR REASSESSMENT OF JUNE 4TH

In early March various international news organizations published a letter written to the Chinese leadership by Dr. Jiang Yanyong, who gained fame for revealing the SARS epidemic cover-up in 2003. Jiang's letter called on the Chinese government to reassess the 1989 Democracy Movement during the annual meeting of the National People's Congress later that month. Jiang had previously urged such a reassessment in a letter in 1998.

Revelation of the letter came on the eve of the 60th Session of the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, and also as the European Commission prepared a ministerial meeting in Brussels later that month to review the arms embargo levied on China as a sanction for the June 4th massacre.

Dr. Jiang's letter is remarkable not only for his courageous stand, but also as an eyewitness account of the events of June 4, 1989, and of his subsequent conversations with senior Chinese leaders on the subject.

The June 4th Memorial Global Coalition, an international committee of overseas Chinese activists established in 2003 and headed by Ding Zilin and HRIC president Liu Qing, has been circulating a petition supporting Dr. Jiang and demanding accountability for the June 4th Massacre. As of mid-May the petition had drawn more than 7,200 signatures from all over the world (www.89-64.org).

Up to now Chinese officials have taken no direct action against 72-year-old Jiang, apparently in recognition of his contributions to the fight against SARS, and because he was not implicated in the leaking of his letter. However, there have been recent reports in the media that Dr. Jiang's telephone is being monitored, and that official sources have begun circulating internal documents describing his claims as "rumor-mongering."

TO: Chairman and Vice-Chairmen of the National People's Congress [NPC],
Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference [CPPCC],
Members of the Chinese Communist Party [CCP] Central Committee Political Bureau,
Premier and Vice-Premiers of the State Council:

In 1989, students in Beijing targeted the corrupt government at that time, justly demanding the elimination of corruption and bureaucratic racketeering and calling for clean and honest government. The students' patriotic movement had the support of the overwhelming majority of people in Beijing and the country. However, a small number of leaders protecting corruption resorted to a frenzied suppression unprecedented in China or even in the world, deploying tanks, machine guns and other weapons against unarmed students and citizens, leaving hundreds of innocent young people dead in the streets of Beijing, and injuring and crippling thousands of others. The authorities then mobilized the full range of their propaganda machinery to fabricate lies, and employed heavy-handed measures to silence the people across the country. Over the past 15 years the authorities have expected this incident to gradually fade from public memory. In the past they called the

Tiananmen incident a “counterrevolutionary rebellion,” and subsequently renamed it the “1989 political turmoil.” This change of name indicates the perpetrators’ guilty conscience. If it was a turmoil, why did they have to mobilize hundreds of thousands of troops to suppress it? Why should they use machine guns and tanks to kill innocent citizens? That is why I propose that we reassess the students’ patriotic movement of June 4, 1989.

I am a surgeon at the People’s Liberation Army [PLA] Number 301 Hospital, and when the June 4th Incident took place in 1989, I was the director of the hospital’s general surgery department. On the evening of June 3, I heard repeated radio broadcasts urging people to stay indoors. While I was in my dormitory at about ten o’clock, I heard a series of gunshots from the north. Several minutes later, my pager beeped, summoning me to the emergency room, and I hurried over. I could not believe my eyes—lying on the floor and on the examination tables were seven young people with blood covering their faces and bodies. EKG tests quickly confirmed that two of them were already dead. My brain buzzed and I nearly passed out.

I have been a surgeon for more than 30 years, and while a member of the medical team of the PLA Railway Corps that built the Chengdu-Kunming Railway, I had faced groups of injured workers, but those injuries had resulted from inevitable accidents during the construction process. Lying before my eyes now in the grand Chinese capital of Beijing were ordinary citizens killed by their own soldiers whom they had armed.

During the two-hour period from ten o’clock to midnight, our hospital’s emergency room accepted 89 patients with bullet wounds. Seven of them later died despite emergency treatment.

But I could not afford the time for further reflection, as another salvo of gunshots brought many more wounded young people to the emergency room on pull carts and pedicabs commandeered by neighborhood people. I examined the injured while instructing my staff to notify other surgeons and nurses to come to the emergency room. All 18 surgical rooms in our hospital were used for emergency treatment, while I handled triage and urgent treatment in the emergency room. During the two-hour period from ten o’clock to midnight, our hospital’s emergency room accepted 89 patients with bullet wounds. Seven of them later died despite emergency treatment. In the 18 surgical rooms, three teams of doctors spent most of the night saving all those who could be saved.

Some of those who died remain in my memory. One was a young man in his twenties, whose parents were cadres retired from the Seventh Machinery Ministry located across the street. They had four or five children. When they heard the radio broadcasts instructing people to stay at home, they instructed their children not to go outside, and everyone sat down to play mahjong. Around ten o’clock, the elderly couple became

sleepy and went to bed. Hearing gunshots, the young man (he was the youngest in the family, and had just received his wedding certificate that day) and his fiancé went outside. As they ran to the Wukesong junction, a salvo of gunshots raked over them, and the girl turned and ran, yelling at her boyfriend to turn back immediately. After running a few steps she found her boyfriend was not following her, so she went back and soon found him lying on the roadside in a pool of blood. She called his name, but there was no response, and when she pulled at him he would not move. People nearby immediately ran over to help, and several of them carried him to our emergency room.

A nurse checked his blood pressure, but there was none. When she performed an EKG test on him, the line on the screen was flat. When I examined him, I found a bullet hole in his left arm, but I could not find an exit wound. His girlfriend begged us to save him, but we could not, because the flat EKG line showed that his heart had stopped, probably because the bullet had entered his heart. The girl was nearly mad with grief, but she immediately went home and brought her boyfriend’s mother to the emergency room. After the mother arrived, she searched her son’s body, but found only the one bullet hole. Kneeling before me, she grasped my legs and tearfully begged me to save her son. My face was also covered with tears, and I was speechless. I knelt down beside this heartbroken mother and told her frankly that her son’s heart was shattered and he could not be saved.

The mother finally calmed down, only to break down again in a torrent of abuse, saying: “I joined the military when I was very young. Then I joined the Party and followed the CCP in fighting Japan and Chiang Kai-shek. Now the PLA has killed my most beloved child—I will surely settle the score with them.” Eventually her son’s body was placed on the floor of our hospital’s morgue along with the other dead, with PLA soldiers guarding them. As the deceased had been vilified as “hooligans,” their bodies were not allowed to be removed. The next day, when the young man’s family members came to claim his body, they were refused. But as they were relatives of a high-ranking general, they were allowed to take away the body soon afterward.

Another victim was a physically robust motorcycle athlete. After exercising in Fengtai that afternoon, he had reached the Wukesong junction in the evening, and was struck by a bullet before he could dismount from his bike. Several people loaded him onto a pull cart and brought him to our emergency room. When I examined him his blood pressure was still normal, but blood was gushing from a large bullet hole on the left side of his groin. We could not apply a tourniquet to that part of his body, and using hands and dressing failed to stanch the flow. We immediately gave him blood transfusions, but our blood supply was already very low. Having lost a great quantity of blood, his blood pressure soon plummeted, and he went into shock and began to experience increasing difficulty breathing. Before my eyes he opened his mouth wide for a last gasp of air, then stopped breathing. As a surgeon, I will never forget as long as I live the sight of a patient dying as I watched, unable to save him because of the situation at the time.

At about midnight, a military officer with the rank of major (the only serviceman we treated that night) was brought to our emergency room. A bullet had pierced his upper left arm. The X-ray picture showed his humerus was shattered and there were many tiny metal fragments in the surrounding tissue (I suspected that the bullet was a dum dum bullet). The military officer told us he had been out visiting relatives, and in the evening as he returned to the street at the entrance to the Military Museum (his place of work), he was injured by a salvo of bullets fired by passing troops. An elderly man on his right and a small boy on his left were both killed instantly. He was fortunate to have only an arm injured. The man who had brought him to the emergency room was a retired serviceman who had fought in the Vietnam War. He said to the many wounded people and medical personnel in the emergency room, "The PLA's support for the left during the Cultural Revolution seriously tarnished its image in the minds of the people. But the troops' use of machine guns and tanks to kill fellow countrymen this time is something that even Heaven cannot tolerate. The military will never be able to regain the confidence of the people."

It was clear that injuries were not caused by ordinary bullets, but by dum dum bullets, which are banned under international convention.

After midnight, the troops had passed by our hospital and no more wounded were brought in. I proceeded to the surgery room to check the situation there. I saw some patients with shattered livers embedded with many metal fragments, and we took pictures as records. In other cases, our doctors also found large amounts of bullet fragments in the wounded persons' intestines. It was clear that the injuries were not caused by ordinary bullets, but by so-called dum dum bullets, which are banned under international convention.

When martial law was imposed on Beijing on May 19, troops deployed to Beijing were blocked by the people from entering the inner city and had to be stationed at our hospital, the Armored Corps, the Ballistics Corps, the Telecommunications Corps and other military units located along Fuxing Avenue. From conversations with our medical staff, the troops stationed at our hospital gradually learned the truth about the student movement, and clearly stated that they would never take part in suppressing it. During that period, at about six o'clock each morning, a helicopter from the Xijiao Airport would fly slowly eastward along Fuxing Avenue and contact the commanders of the troops stationed in various units (our hospital had a regiment commander) to make sure the troops were ready for deployment. The troops would be ready and standing at attention when the helicopter arrived, and the regiment commander would contact the helicopter via radio, saying that his unit was prepared. Soon after the helicopter left, the officers and men of the unit would disperse to chat with the comrades in our hospital.

Because these units could no longer be assigned to suppress the students, they were withdrawn in late May and early June. I heard that the troops who later took part in suppressing the students were hurriedly deployed from Shandong and other places. Many of the soldiers in those units had fought in Vietnam and had killed during confrontations with the enemy. When they were deployed to Beijing by train, they were given no newspapers to read and no radio to listen to, and they were totally in the dark regarding the situation. Soon after they came to Beijing, they were told that their mission was to suppress a counterrevolutionary rebellion in Beijing. Under these circumstances, the ignorant soldiers did what they were told, resulting in the tragic events of June 4.

On the evening of June 3, not one of the medical workers in our hospital who took part in saving lives had imagined that such an inexplicable tragedy could occur. At that time I even thought that it could have been an incident caused by a certain military leader who had gone haywire. At that time I talked to the director of our hospital, surnamed Liao, asking him whether we could telephone senior officials and ask them to immediately put a stop to the situation that was happening before our eyes. Like me, President Liao was dissolved in tears and did not know what to do.

On the morning of June 4, a tank drove up to our hospital's outpatient clinic and two unconscious soldiers were brought in. At that time I was still in the emergency room. I learned from those who brought the unconscious soldiers that they might have been gassed. Director Liao and I talked it over and decided that the Academy of Military Medical Sciences across the avenue should know how to treat people injured by poisonous gas. We telephoned the Academy, and at the same time tried to think of a way to transport the soldiers there through a tunnel under the avenue. Director Liao, myself and other comrades in our hospital were pained to think of our people and soldiers being injured in such a manner.

On June 9, Deng Xiaoping summoned the leaders of all units and initiated an urgent investigation. One day, Professor Zhu Ke, who was my former classmate and director of the hospital's neurology department, came to see me and said that the hospital had instructed him to have me explain a trip I made to Tiananmen in mid-May with some graduate students from our hospital. I told Zhu, "Don't get involved in this. Whoever wants to know about the trip should come talk to me in person." Soon afterward, a comrade from the hospital's political department visited me. He told me that senior officials had viewed a videotape in which I was seen accompanying the graduate students to the inner city. He said the students were on a truck traveling down Fuxin Avenue, bearing a banner stating, "Support Group from the PLA Postgraduate Medical School," and beating gongs and drums, and that I was following them on a bicycle. He asked me to explain what was going on.

I told him, "That day was a Wednesday. Our department was scheduled to go downtown that afternoon to attend an academic symposium sponsored by the Beijing Surgery Society, and I had reserved transportation. When we went to the motor pool, we were told that it could not dispatch any vehicles because the roads were congested with demonstrators. Then I

saw many medical students inside the hospital gate. They were all wearing white gowns and were preparing to go to Tiananmen to show support for the students. When these students saw me, they asked me to join them. I asked them what time they would return and they said they planned to camp out at Tiananmen Square. I told them that in that case I could not ride with them, and I rode my bicycle alongside their truck, chatting with them along the way. When we reached Lishi Road, no motor vehicles could proceed, so they disembarked and continued walking downtown while I continued along on my bicycle to Tiananmen. Because of a sudden rainstorm, I only made a round of the Square and then hurried back to the hospital." Everyone knew I had gone to Tiananmen, and I had done nothing wrong. I told the comrade to report back what I had told him, and from then on, whenever the June 4th Incident was discussed, I insisted that the suppression of the student movement was wrong. Because of that, I did not receive the promotion due to me that year.

Following June 4, everything was measured by one's attitude toward the incident.

Following June 4, everything was measured by one's attitude toward the incident. One example is the reorganization of the leadership of our fraternal unit, the Academy of Military Medical Sciences. When higher authorities interviewed Professor Qin Boyi, the director of the Academy at that time, he frankly stated that he had done nothing wrong. When the martial law troops were unable to go downtown and had to be stationed in some of the military units along the way, in his capacity as head of the Academy Director Qin stipulated that if the troops wanted to be stationed in the Academy, they should also bear the responsibility of safeguarding its security; otherwise if other people also wanted to come in, there could be unnecessary complications. Consequently, the troops were not stationed in the Academy. As to the delivery of drinking water to students who were on hunger strike in Tiananmen Square, the people in the Academy had wanted to send water, and Qin agreed to do it and approved the use of a motor vehicle for that purpose, because many other units were doing the same thing. The investigation resulted in the dismissal of Professor Qin.

The vice-director of the Academy was Professor Tang Peixuan, a classmate of mine. When speaking to the leaders, he said that when he took part in a student movement before Liberation, the Kuomintang government turned fire hoses on the students rather than using guns to suppress them. He said it was incomprehensible that in this instance the people's troops had used machine guns and tanks to brutally mow down countless students and ordinary people. Tang was then dismissed from his post. But another vice-director of the Academy was promoted to director because he said what his superiors wanted to hear and performed well.

Following the June 4th Incident, the overwhelming majority of my friends in all walks of life clearly understood that the June 4th suppression was absolutely wrong, but because of pressure from above they did not dare to speak their minds. In

this respect, the image of the people in unity with the central authorities was entirely false. Over the past 15 long years, I have at every opportunity stated clearly that I believed the June 4th suppression was absolutely wrong. I hoped that our party would take decisive measures to correct this error. When the Cultural Revolution had brought China to the verge of collapse, Deng Xiaoping emerged and our Party was able to correct the errors of the Cultural Revolution. China was not thrown into chaos, but rather the people regained their confidence in the Party. In those days, China had serious food shortages, and we had to use ration coupons to buy everything, but the people still supported the Party in surmounting all sorts of difficulties, with the result that in barely 20 years, our country has significantly changed. Now our country has plenty of goods and the people's living conditions have significantly improved. Now it is the common wish of the Chinese people and of people throughout the world that the errors of the June 4th Incident be corrected. As long as the leaders of our party act with firm resolve to correct the errors, I believe they will have the support of the whole nation and China will not experience chaos.

In 1997 I visited Comrade Wu Zuguang¹ in his home. He told me that he had wanted to speak at the CPPCC National Committee session that year but the session's chairman wanted his written speech in advance; consequently the chairman did not let him speak at the session and he could only speak at the literature and art group discussion. He started out by endorsing Comrade Deng Xiaoping's reform and opening policy, which had resulted in China's revolutionary economic changes over the past 20 years, and for which the Chinese people would not forget Deng's meritorious contributions. Then he pointed out Deng Xiaoping's errors in handling the June 4th Incident, and said that now that Deng was dead, we should reassess the incident. Deng was a very old man in 1989 and he learned what was happening outside primarily through other people's impressions. At that time Deng was deceived by Chen Xitong,² who gave him false information, claiming that reactionary forces at home and abroad were inciting the students. Now that Chen had been found guilty of corruption, he should be the one to be held criminally accountable, and the true nature of the incident should be made known. Wu told me that after he finished his talk at the group discussion, no one at the session expressed disagreement (and of course no one could come up with any legitimate reason to disagree), but no one supported his view either. That hurt him tremendously. He knew that the session was attended by the country's top intellectuals, who in private were in complete agreement with his views, but who nevertheless were afraid to speak their minds at the meeting, and it broke his heart.

Wu's wife, Xin Fengxia, told me that she always urged him not to express any views, as it would do no good, but Wu would not listen and seized every opportunity to state his views. Wu said to me, "Everybody has a mouth, which is for eating and speaking. If you speak, you must speak the truth, not lies, and if you don't dare to speak your mind, and only use your mouth for eating, what good is it?" I learned much from Wu's words: A man must speak out and tell the truth.

Later I visited Lei Jieqiong and Wu Jieping,³ who were my teachers when I was a student at Yanjing University. I told them my experience in treating the injured at Hospital 301 on the evening of June 3. They indicated that they were not aware of the specifics, but they both maintained that the government made grave errors in handling the incident. They said they could do nothing now, but believed the issue would certainly be resolved in the future.

In 1998, I and some other senior Party members wrote a letter to state leaders, NPC deputies and CPPCC representatives, proposing that the June 4th Incident be reappraised.

In 1998, I called on Comrade Yang Shangkun⁴ at his residence and reported to him my visit to Taiwan (Yang had always been the principal person in charge of the Taiwan issue) and I told him the views of my cousin, Jiang Yanshi,⁵ regarding reunification. Then I told Yang that I was the surgeon in charge of treating the injured brought to Hospital 301 and asked him whether he was willing to hear my views. He said he was willing, so I told him what I had seen, and I gave him a copy of the letter that I had written to the central leaders. Yang indicated that the June 4th Incident was the most serious mistake ever committed by the Party, and while he could not rectify it, it would definitely be rectified in the future.

Yang Shangkun indicated that the June 4th Incident was the most serious mistake ever committed by the Party, and would definitely be rectified in the future.

Comrade Yang Shangkun's view was in fact the view of many other Party elders. After the June 4th Incident, the Central Advisory Commission chaired by Bo Yibo⁶ held a session to criticize four elderly comrades, Yu Guangyuan, Du Runsheng, Li Rui and Li Chang.⁷ Some people even planned to recommend that these four Party members not be allowed to renew their membership. But then Comrade Chen Yun⁸ wrote a letter for Bo Yibo to read out loud at the plenary session of the Central Advisory Commission. The letter said, in effect, "We must stop handling the matter this way. We've already learned this lesson many times in the past. Isn't it possible that we will have to rehabilitate these people in the future?" After reading the letter, Bo said, "That's the end of this matter, we will not speak of it further." Comrade Chen Yun made it very clear in his letter that he opposed handling the June 4th Incident in such a manner. I don't know whether this important view of Comrade Chen Yun was referred to the CCP Central Committee, the NPC Standing Committee and the CPPCC Standing Committee.

Recently I read the book, *For China's Future* [Sheng Zhe yu Si Zhe—Weile Zhongguo de Mingtian],⁹ written by Ding Zilin of the Tiananmen Mothers. The book made clear to me the pressure and pain experienced over the past 15 years by the mother of an enthusiastic 17-year-old youth who was killed in the June 4th Incident. This mother and other family members of the victims have used all available means to locate and contact the families of nearly 200 victims and others who became

permanently handicapped, and have used a variety of means to express their wish—demanding that the government should seriously and responsibly explain to them the killing of their family members, which is an entirely reasonable request. Who among us does not have parents, children, brothers and sisters? Who would have an innocent family member killed and not voice the same demand? Any Party member, Chinese citizen and human being must courageously support their just demand. Beginning in 1995, they have made it a practice each year to write an open letter to the NPC Standing Committee stating their just demand. Regrettably, however, this most powerful state organ has turned a deaf ear to this serious request and has made no response whatsoever. This is an extremely irresponsible attitude, which we cannot justify before the people of the world.

I have written quite a lot already, but my main point is this: Following the 16th National People's Congress, the new Party and national leaders have stressed on all occasions the need to act in accordance with the Constitution and emphasize the welfare of the people. That being the case, the NPC Standing Committee, the CPPCC Standing Committee, the members of the 16th CCP Central Committee Politburo and members of its standing committee must reassess the June 4th Incident in light of the criteria in the Constitution and the Party's three fundamental principles—"integrating theory with practice (or seeking truth from facts), maintaining close ties with the masses, and making criticism and self-criticism." Our party must address the errors it has made, and the earlier and more thoroughly these errors are resolved, the better. I believe that a correct assessment of the June 4th Incident is what the people want, and that it will not cause unrest among the people. Emphasizing the overriding importance of stability can in fact cause even greater instability. For years, as June 4 has approached, some people have been on pins and needles, wondering how many troops they will need to mobilize this time to prevent disturbances. Year after year, this uneasiness has not diminished as the June 4th Incident has gradually retreated further into the past, but on the contrary, the people have become increasingly disappointed and angry.

After long deliberation, I feel I must write you this letter. Of course I have considered the consequences that I might encounter after writing this letter, but I have decided nevertheless to truthfully state my views to all of you. If the leadership thinks it is necessary, please talk to me at your convenience.

Please acknowledge receipt of this letter.

My address:

No. 26, Zhuge Zhuang, Wanshou Road, 5-1204

Zip code: 100036

Tel: 68134451

[Signed] Jiang Yanyong, Department of Surgery, Beijing 301 Hospital

[Dated] February 24, 2004

Revised by Stacy Mosher from translations posted on China Digital News (<http://journalism.berkeley.edu/projects/chinadn/en/archives/002276.html>) and China Labour Bulletin (http://www.china-labour.org.hk/iso/article.adp?article_id=5286&category_name=General)

1. One of China's most famous playwrights, Wu Zuguang died of coronary heart disease on April 10, 2003.
2. Formerly mayor of Beijing, Chen Xitong was forced to resign on allegations of corruption in April 1995, and on July 31, 1998 was sentenced to 16 years in prison. He was quietly granted conditional release in early 2004.
3. Both Lei and Wu were vice-chairmen of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress.
4. As President of China (1988–1993) and vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission, Yang Shangkun headed the military crackdown in 1989. He was eventually ousted from power over reported attempts to replace Jiang Zemin as Party leader. Yang died on September 14, 1998.
5. Tsiang Yen-si, a senior KMT official who held many important offices in Taiwan.
6. Bo Yibo is the only one of the party elders active in 1989 who is still alive.
7. Yu Guangyaun, a professor at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Du Runsheng, former director of the Research Centre for China's Rural Development and a close associate of purged party secretary Zhou Zhiyang, Li Rui, former personal secretary to Mao Zedong and a recent advocate of political reform, and Li Chang were all senior Party members who had expressed sympathy for the student movement.
8. Chen Yun headed the Party's Central Advisory Committee from 1987 to 1992. He died on April 10, 1995.
9. Ding Zilin and Jiang Peikun, *For China's Future* [Sheng Zhe yu Si Zhe—Weile Zhongguo de Mingtian] (Human Rights in China, 2000).

To the Students at Tiananmen

BY WANG YU

From the time you gathered at Tiananmen
Our daylight dissolved into your midnight
To become a white night enmeshed in nightmares
As twilight descended upon your shoulders
Dawn's light slowly ascended
Our terrified eyes
Irrepressible cries of horror
As yet another white night arrived

We lived in
A nightmare between
The eastern and western hemispheres
Between one night and the next and one dream
and the next
The direction shifted
And crisis concealed itself beside you
From the first it was a group of you
Betraying yourselves
Beware!
Youth of China
History bowed its head in shame
The badge of revolution rusted
And warped
A thief's cunning
A butcher's treachery

Exhausted
We glued our eyes to the news
On the glittering screen
In the newspaper
We joined our hearts to your bodies

The white night scorched us
At some unknown time

The troops appeared
And shouted with rage—
Your echo
Resounded across the globe
You were our hope
China's future
In the heart of the motherland
With youth you attacked
Withered arteries
And transplanted them with living
Democracy and freedom
In May 1989
The world watched you in hope
Youth of China
As you shed your light on the darkness
And lit a lantern in the heart of the motherland

Where darkness transited into white night
Hope battled despair
Blind to the tanks
Blind to recklessness

Have no fear that someone will oppose the future
An eternally unobstructable willpower
Is passed from one generation to the next
Youth of China
Marching heroically toward
The breach of dawn.

Composed June 3, 1989
Published June 24, 1989 in *Wen Wui Po* (Hong Kong)

Translated by Stacy Mosher