

虎嘯風雷



When
your
heart is

Half a world away

MU's Chinese students continue to feel the effects of the Chinese government's crushing the student protests on Tiananmen Square in Beijing in June. Since current Mizzou students believe their lives and those of their families to be in danger, their names have been changed in this article.

By **MARION FEATHERSTONE** Reprinted from the Columbia Missourian's Sunday magazine, Dec. 3, 1989.

The two-room apartment on College Avenue is small and dark but clean. The landlord does not mind if the tenants are foreigners. Some owners do.

The smell of boiled pork clings to the drapes and upholstery. Sharp curry pricks the air. There are no personal photographs, ashtrays or stray magazines. A single poster dominates the room. It is a black-and-white photograph of one figure standing in front of a column of military tanks. A long gun is angled above his head. In gray, the caption reads "PLACE: TIAN AN MEN 5 JUN 89." The grainy image is an understatement of terror.

The Chinese man nods at the poster. "This is why I use no names. My own name could have me, my family, killed if the Chinese government knew I protested against its action in Tiananmen Square. It's difficult to know what to do anymore. I could stay, yes. But I need China, I think, and the homeland needs me," he says.

This chemical engineering student, studying at MU at the request of the Chinese government, is one of 156 students on Campus who must determine whether he will return home after graduation or become a tempest-tossed refugee in a nation where the Statue of Liberty is never burned by the government. While President George Bush has granted asylum for the 40,000 Chinese students studying nationwide, hard-line party members applied pressure on them to return home. In an additional attempt to stave off the flow of Western ideas, the Chinese government has reportedly denied future scholars access to universities overseas. Privately, some educators and administrators on Campus say some students who would have arrived in America for the winter semester have abruptly changed plans.

"There is no decision," says Wang Guolai, a political science major. "For us, it's to stay or go. It's like a nursery rhyme, but the end of the game could be bloody."

The spilling of blood is a recurrent theme for the Chinese students after the violence on Tiananmen Square that left an estimated 1,000 to 2,500 civilians dead.

At first I was very astonished," June Yung says. A pharmacology student from Beijing, she has been in Columbia for one year. "Sometimes I sat in front of it (the television) for hours and cried. I just cried. Every people feels proud of their country. Now I just feel shameful for China."

A political science student from Shanghai, Li Jianguo, sympathizes with Yung's sense of shock. "Most of us could not believe the blood." He leans forward, smiling nervously. His fingers worry over the zipper on his jacket. He is afraid that he cannot adequately explain his horror. "Most of us were disappointed. No one expected anything would happen. Then, of course, the government rolled the tanks."

Now everything is different for the Chinese students, those at home as well as at MU. This semester's freshman class at Beijing University, China's pre-eminent school, must first complete a year of military camp before taking any course work. This punishment is light compared with the re-education forced upon most of the demonstrators. Privately, some

Chinese fear these students, sent to the countryside to do manual labor with the peasant farmers, will be forever exiled to the rural areas, never to be allowed back into the larger cities to gain better employment. Fears of arrests and executions also threaten the innocent at home and abroad.

During the military crackdown, pharmacology student Yung spent hours calling Beijing, trying to confirm the safety of her family, who had supported the democracy movement. Hearing the eerie calm in her parents' voices, she realized that any assumed safety was vulnerable. "I just called my family three times and cried about the pictures on the news that we are getting in the West. Finally, one time they tell me, 'Don't tell this. We know the truth, and we understand.' They thought the lines might be monitored."

In the background, Yung could hear machine gunfire.

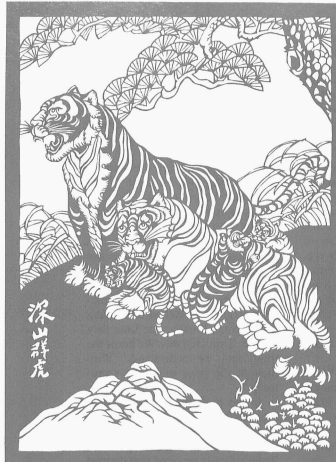
Today, the city is calm, but an undercurrent of suspicion prevails. Yung's family reported that distrust

Coffee hour brews international flavor

With students from 110 countries on Campus, the International Coffee Hour is usually filled to the brim. Between 100 and 150 students from other countries join with Americans to exchange conversation and customs for two hours the first Friday of each month in Brady Commons.

MU's international students extend this rich cultural flavor to traditional American students they meet in their classes across Campus. The 1,460 international students who came here in the fall were enrolled in 14 schools and colleges. Of those, 390 were undergraduates, two were in professional schools and 1,068 in graduate school.

Carl Leistner, coordinator of International Student Services, says the past few years has seen the biggest increase in students from Taiwan and mainland China. "One reason is because Taiwan's government is now permitting undergraduates to go abroad to study," he says. New exchange programs also are bringing more students from Europe, Central America and the Caribbean. One of those programs, the American Collegiate for East-West Cultural and Academic Exchange, brought three students from the Soviet Union to Campus this fall and sent two American students to Russia. —*Juan M. McKee*



became routine and altered daily lives and relationships. "Now everything looks normal, but the people no longer believe each other," she says. "They go to work. They quietly go home. Then they shut the door. This is just like a nightmare when you have to watch everything. We can't forget this."

For many Chinese students, the dangers involved in living and working in China are exemplified by what happened to Wu Ziaoyong, MA '82, the son of a member of the Chinese Politburo who was a former mayor of Beijing. Wu was arrested in Beijing in August for breaking into a radio program to announce the Tiananmen massacre. Rumors of his execution were frequent until October when Western sources confirmed Wu's sentence of 20 years in prison for air piracy.

Such stories sharpen the feelings of confusion and despair for students who, even before the Tiananmen uprising, had difficulty coping with life in mid-Missouri.

"You can't think this is fun," says Guolai, the political science major. He left his bride last spring in Beijing. "I can't afford to talk to my wife

on the phone, and who knows what happens to the mails. If she is as lonely as I am ... I am already failing as my duty of being a husband."

Short-term discomfort, however, can mean monetary and social rewards upon return to China. Speaking practically, for many of the Chinese students studying thousands of miles from home, an American degree can translate into at least an additional thousand American dollars a year in income for those who return.

The pain up front, however, is frustrating. Often, married couples are separated, and children remain in the native land. Furthermore, the Chinese government never loses tabs on students who have ventured overseas.

"The (Chinese) government keeps asking me how my grades are," Guolai says. "But how can I really study when five of us have to share a room with one low light? I see your people walking to classes in warm clothes with smiles and laughs. They never smile at me unless I've fallen in the grating or gutter. Surely they aren't mean, but they can't know my situation."

Building a home environment can help dull the edge of homesickness. But it isn't easy. Guolai believes his living conditions are typical of the average Chinese student in America. He lives with four other men in a two-bedroom apartment.

"We play cards to see who is going to get the big room. I've lost for the past two weeks. It's OK, though. You don't have to make up a couch if there are no sheets," he says.

His wife believes he has an apartment to himself. "She has these ideas of America," Guolai says. His face gives way to a sheepish smile. "I can't tell her the truth because she is too young to have her dreams destroyed. Every person needs dreams thousand of miles from your heart. That's how you keep hope in the world."

He does not mind sacrificing small truths for the hope he thinks is

in short supply in this world. "I really just can't think for the two of us and our families anymore. Even if I could get all of them over here, do I want to subject them to the cold stares here and the tortures of conjugating English verbs? It's that or returning to them in the land of Deng where his army are gods. If I were alone, I might have a different answer, but now I don't even know how to respond."

Another Chinese man in Columbia, however, doesn't worry about such issues. A seasoned journalist currently studying at the School of Journalism, Xie Hongrui says for him there is no pressure to stay or to go, but that he feels a strong sense of obligation to return.

"I am a patriot," Hongrui says. "I will go home no matter what happened in China. My career is in China. My family, wife and son, my mother, relatives and many friends remain in the homeland."

"It is to the benefit to my country, also to America for me to leave. My country expects output from me after input or investment in me. America may want me to put into practice what I learned here. American people may not want to see so many Chinese staying here, asking for job opportunity, scholarship and whatever. My countrymen may like to see my timely return home so that the government policy may not change, and they can have equal chance to see beautiful America."

The decision to return home may be easier for Hongrui than for other Chinese students studying abroad; he doubts a massacre on Tiananmen Square actually occurred. He believes the government's claim that any blood spilled in Tiananmen Square was soldier's blood. While there is no official recognition of any civilian casualties, the government reports the murder of 10 soldiers on the square.

Some Chinese here struggle with the conflicting reports. Hongrui says he did not see any evidence of civilian casualties on the square. "I am about 80 percent certain in the government," he says. "I was not there, so maybe I didn't see the truth on Western television. But I could not see any backdrop of buildings on Tiananmen Square where the

wounded students supposedly were. Also, there were no real eyewitnesses who saw any killing."

As a federally employed journalist, Hongrui believes any piece of news needs to be healthy for the overall population before it can be published or broadcast. Like his government, he believes truth can be superfluous. He adds that people who work hard and trust in the government need not fear harm. The newspapers and magazines within China also demonstrate complete trust in the government's news machine. In an article in the China Daily, a newspaper published in Beijing, two students and a professor agreed that they never saw any civilian blood during the removal of the students from the square. All three said they remained on the square throughout the entire student dismissal. All three expressed outrage at the treatment of the soldiers called in to restore order.

Still, others express astonishment at any doubt. Yung's outrage stems from those Chinese who chose to believe what she calls propaganda.

"Why don't they believe the killings?" she asks incredulously. "I don't know. Maybe these people and journalists need to protect their families. Maybe they fear they will be arrested or executed even. I don't know. But not believe the massacre? It's simply a fact."

According to Western diplomats, most demonstrators need not greatly fear being arrested or executed. There is already an acute shortage of professionals. Re-education, however, is much more likely. As part of the re-education program, civilians must study speeches by hard-line communists. They must also familiarize themselves with the official state art displayed in government museums. Exhibits include photographs of army tanks burned during the student movement.

Such re-education may also await Chinese students here. Political science student Jianguo understands that if he follows his plans and returns to Shanghai to teach political science and journalism at Shanghai University, he will be vulnerable to the re-education policy established by former leader Deng Xiaoping. Already, top professors are forced to perform manual labor on university

grounds as part of their punishment.

"That is one of the oldest tactics the government can use," Jianguo says. "I do not have a bad taste for manual labor. I could do it. It's just not the worst they can do. This does not affect my personal safety."

As a survivor of Mao Tse-tung's Cultural Revolution, a bloody and far-reaching purge of those intellectuals deemed threatening to the Chinese government, federal journalist Hongrui has already been to the re-education camps. He resents the two years he spent working in the fields, years that could have gone to his education or career, but he believes the benefits are invaluable.

"The two years I spent in the army were a waste of time to some extent. Still I had a positive experience because I know how the peasants toil under the hot sun so we can eat," he says. "So when I work, I should think of the 80 percent of the Chinese who are not intellectuals. I even hope my son can have such an experience."

Hongrui's son took his higher education placement examinations during the student uprising. As he studied, he could hear the sounds of the square from his window.

Despite the drama and complexity of politics associated with the spring turmoil, many students hope the Western world will understand that China can take care of itself.

"This is an internal matter," Jianguo says. "The Chinese can handle it. The Western governments should support that."

In the meantime, Jianguo is unsure who is going to support him. Despite the fact that President Bush has extended sanctuary for those who would like to remain in America, many are supported by the Chinese government and have no money to stay. The few scholarships offered by the American government are difficult to obtain and fall far short of covering tuition and living costs.

Lack of funds, however, is not the



only thing that would push these students back to the Orient.

A Korean professor at the School of Journalism, Dr. Won Chang, has heard the students privately vent their frustrations. They could return home and lead lives of private desperation, or they could stay in America and face social and economic hostilities.

"Those with family in China have very mixed feelings," Chang says. "They don't have many options. I don't know if they will take the risk of starting all over again. They have their careers, their families. I just do not think they will want to work in the restaurants and shops of America. That's the only thing available right now. They are legally allowed to stay, but that doesn't mean they have the support to stay."

"It's just so difficult to know," Yung says. Her voice wavers. She bites her lower lip to stop it from trembling. "Sometimes I wonder: If there really is a good God, why does China always suffer? But I still hope China becomes strong. Just like everyone hopes you have a good mother and father, it doesn't always mean it happens. You can't always be proud, but you can still hope." ☐