

# Baptist Missionary to China Recalls TianAnMen Square

Twenty years ago today, I was awakened by the dreadful news that the Chinese government chose to use force in stopping the non-violent student demonstrations. I had just left Beijing and was in Hong Kong when the BBC announced that tanks and armed forces were sent into the TianAnMen (Heavenly Gate) Square on Chang'An Road (Road of Eternal Peace).

I had walked among the students there and later at Nanjing and never heard a word about overthrowing the government. All the students wanted was less corruption and more democracy in their People's Republic of China. The crowds were joyous. Seminary students in Nanjing marched too. They set up a table and served water to all with the sign, "Living Water." As they walked through the streets in huge numbers, storekeepers, workers and shoppers all stopped to applaud them. Huge banners hung from skyscraper windows that once had streamers saying, "Long live Chairman Mao." They now said, "Long live the students."

It all began months earlier when students were not allowed into the memorial service of Hu Yaobang, a well-liked Communist party leader. Not allowed to express their grief, they camped in the Square. The Premier at the time, Zhao Zhiyang, was sympathetic to the students and was demoted and put under house arrest.

The impulsive nature of the young radicals clouded their ability to realize they were winning. They pushed too hard and fast. Chairman Deng Xiaoping finally ordered the troops in.

Now another generation has grown up, with little knowledge, other than what they have been told by parents and loved ones, of those days. There was no mention of it in public in China. It never happened as far as the government goes.

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Only in Hong Kong was there allowed a demonstration marking the 20th anniversary of one of China's darkest days

But the lid on the jar of China's expanding freedom is not secure and, in time, justice will prevail and a really new China will emerge — not as our enemy, but friend.

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