

Transcript of PBS *Frontline* Program: The Tank Man

THE TANK MAN

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Written, produced and directed by Antony Thomas

ANNOUNCER: Tonight on FRONTLINE: Tiananmen Square, June, 1989.

JIM LAURIE, Fmr. ABC News Correspondent: People started to scream at us, "Take pictures! Take video! Tell the world what's going on. They're killing innocent people."

ANNOUNCER: In the wake of a bloody crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrators, one solitary man defied the awesome power of the Chinese state.

T.D. ALLMAN, Author and Journalist: This man just went out, and he said, "Stop," and the tank stopped.

ANNOUNCER: But who was he?

ROBIN MUNRO, Director, China Labour Bulletin: In a sense, he stood for the ordinary people.

ANNOUNCER: And what happened to him?

OBSERVER: He just melted into the crowd and he was gone.

ANNOUNCER: Tonight, veteran filmmaker Antony Thomas investigates the fate of this heroic figure??

ANTONY THOMAS: *[voice-over]* For over a year, we also followed every lead.

ANNOUNCER: ?? and explores the bold gamble of China's leaders to quell the spirit of Tiananmen.

ANTONY THOMAS: How do you prevent the fire from spreading?

ANNOUNCER: Through their open embrace of capitalism.

ORVILLE SCHELL, Author and Journalist: It is an amazing miracle, what has happened since 1989.

ANNOUNCER: ?? tough political repression??

JAN WONG, Author and Journalist: If you've ever seen security people manhandle a Chinese citizen, they are really brutal.

ANNOUNCER: ?? and strict censorship of the media.

ANTONY THOMAS: But not one single image of Tank Man.

Rep. CHRISTOPHER SMITH (R), New Jersey: Leading U.S. companies like Google, Yahoo!, Cisco and Microsoft have compromised their duty as responsible corporate citizens.

ELLIOT SCHRAGE, V.P., Google Inc.: This was not something that we did enthusiastically or not something that we're proud of at all.

ANNOUNCER: Tonight on FRONTLINE, the story behind one of the most powerful images of our time.





BRUCE HERSCHENSOHN, Pepperdine University: What this young man did was, in effect, change the world.

ANNOUNCER: A search for the meaning and the mystery of The Tank Man.

ANTONY THOMAS: *[voice-over]* Tiananmen Square, Beijing, the largest public space in the world, created on an inhuman scale. The monumental public buildings that line the edges and the vast, treeless spaces in between speak of the insignificance of the individual before the might of the state.

The atmosphere here is edgy. Even with permits and government minders, our filming is constantly interrupted. Soldiers, policemen, men in plain clothes, all demand our papers. The authorities here are afraid of cameras. They know their power. They have hundreds of them trained on Tiananmen Square, their cameras.

Cameras in other hands are considered dangerous, and with good reason. This place can be a powder keg.

On a June night in 1989, Tiananmen Square was a war zone. An army 300,000 strong   that's almost twice the numbers we sent into Iraq   the People's Liberation Army, fought its way into Beijing from four directions, with orders to converge on the square. Unarmed citizens and students faced armored personnel carriers, tanks and soldiers armed with semi-automatic weapons.

By 5:30 A.M. on June 4th, 1989, the army's mission had been accomplished.

T.D. ALLMAN, Author and Journalist: Gradually, the dawn came up. And Beijing, you know how misty it is, smoggy. This wasn't a sunrise. This was like a grayness gradually acquiring some sort of light. Where all this life had been was this quadrangle of tanks facing out. All the students were gone, and I just stood there and I watched.

ANTONY THOMAS: T.D. Allman was staying at this Beijing hotel, which has a commanding view of Changan Avenue, the Avenue of Eternal Peace, that runs directly into Tiananmen Square. On these balconies, Western reporters and photographers had crouched, often under gunfire, to record the events of the night of June 3rd/4th.

Then, at noon on the 5th, when the army seemed in complete control, something remarkable happened on Changan Avenue, immediately below.

T.D. ALLMAN: The tanks danced! It was obscene. It was like an obscene dance. They just didn't roll out, they swivelled around. God knows why they did that. And then the moment came which has intrigued you and fascinated and moved the world. You stand there, and you're looking down. This tank's coming out. It's got its gun up. And this man just went out and he said, "Stop!"

Prof. TIMOTHY BROOK, Univ. of British Columbia: It's absolutely extraordinary. You could look at him as unusually brave, but he probably wasn't. He was probably just an ordinary person who was so disgusted at what he had seen for the last few days. And he said, "Right. That's it. I'm going out and I'm just going to stand in front of that column."

JAN WONG, Author and Journalist: The tank did not try to just run him over. It turned to go around him. And then the young man jumped in front of the tank. And then the tank turns the other way, and the young man jumps the other side. They did this a couple of times, and then the tank turned off its motors.

And then it seemed to me that all the tanks turned off their motors because it was really quiet.

ROBIN MUNRO, Director, China Labour Bulletin: Standing in front of a column of tanks, no one around him, he was all on his own with his shopping bag in his hand. He climbed on top of the tank, banged on the lid, said, "Get out of my city! You're not wanted here." We don't know exactly what he said, but it's clear that's what he wanted to say.

JAN WONG: And I started to cry because I had seen so much shooting and so many people dying that I was sure this man would get crushed. So I remember thinking, "I can't cry because I can't see. I want to watch this."

CHARLES COLE, Photojournalist: During this time, I'm thinking, "This guy is going to be killed any moment now. And if he is, I just can't miss this. This is something that he's giving his life for. It's my responsibility to record it as accurately as possible."

JAN WONG: And then, after a while, the young man jumps down, and the tank turned on the motor. The young man blocked him again, and I think, "He's just going to get crushed."

CHARLES COLE: I realized that the public security bureau had been watching us from the other rooftop by binoculars. So I went in and took the film out of the camera and reloaded it into the plastic film can, and went into the toilet, took off the top of the toilet and put it in the holding tank, put the toilet top back on.

And shortly after that, probably 10, 15 minutes afterwards, the public security bureau broke through the door. They got one other roll of film from the shots that I'd taken from the night before, and they were pretty satisfied they'd cleaned up the situation.

About a day-and-a-half later, I worked my way back in through the back streets to the Beijing Hotel, and luckily, nobody had flushed the toilet.

ANTONY THOMAS: *[on camera]* So one of the most famous photographs of the 20th century was floating in the top of a lav.

CHARLES COLE: Floating in the top of the toilet, and possibly could have been literally flushed, yeah.

ANTONY THOMAS: *[voice-over]* Images of that extraordinary confrontation became icons of freedom. They have been reproduced on T-shirts and posters ever since. President Bush commended his courage, and leaders the world over hailed him. He became an inspiration to millions, and he changed lives forever.

XIAO QIANG, Former Student Leader: For all my years conducting investigations into human rights abuses, I never forgot this young man who stand in front of tanks. It's not only me that never forgot, the world did not forget him.

TONG YI, Former Student Leader: I spent, you know, years in the labor camp. I confronted the regime also in the labor camp. That image actually played a key role to me.

BRUCE HERSCHENSOHN, Pepperdine University: He wanted to change China, but what he did was help to change the Soviet Union. I went to a number of countries in Eastern Europe before the Berlin wall came down. And I was complimenting their courage, and they said, "If that kid in China stood in front of those tanks, we can do what we're doing." What this young man did was, in effect, change the world.

ANTONY THOMAS: Within minutes of his incredible act of defiance, Tank Man was hustled away, by whom we do not know, and vanished. And still, we have no idea of his fate or who he was. But to some, it appears he was not a student, more likely an ordinary working man.

ROBIN MUNRO, Director, China Labour Bulletin: He didn't look at all like a student. He looked like someone on his way to work or who'd just knocked off and was on his way home, doing the shopping on the way home. In a sense, he stood for the ordinary people.

ANTHONY THOMAS: The protests that climaxed with the Tank Man's lonely act of defiance had begun five weeks earlier with a mass student demonstration, and in most Western media, continued to be treated as a student phenomenon. But there's much more to this story.

The students had touched a nerve, and soon everyone seemed to be out there protesting against hardship, government corruption and 40 years of repression. In Tiananmen Square and on the streets of Beijing, in cities right across China, there were tens of millions of Tank Men. Whole swathes of the country were in open revolt.

JAN WONG, Author and Journalist: In Beijing, one in ten of the population was joining in, and that includes all the old people, all the little children. So it was massive.

ORVILLE SCHELL, Author, Journalist: There were people in heavy earth-moving equipment. Honey bucket collectors and a tank truck came in. There were pilots. There were hotel workers.





ROBIN MUNRO: It was just a carnival of protest. All the groups were out there with their own banners, saying, "We are the Beijing journalists. We demand press freedom. We demand the right to tell the truth."

JAN WONG: You had doctors and nurses and scientists and army people demonstrating. The Chinese navy was demonstrating. And I thought, this is extraordinary because who's left? It's just the top leaders who aren't out there.

ORVILLE SCHELL: People thought that the old regime was somehow about to fall. And indeed, it was hard to imagine how it could be otherwise at that moment.

ANTHONY THOMAS: For the very first time, press and television were reporting freely and truthfully. The virus of freedom quickly spread.

ORVILLE SCHELL: You could feel something uncontrollable building. And of course, from there it moved outward across the country.

JONATHAN MIRSKY, Author and Journalist: Uprisings occurred all over China, in at least 400 cities   we know this from the Chinese press and from their own military museum   all the way from Mongolia in the northwest down to the southeast near Hong Kong.

ANTHONY THOMAS: And from these cities, hundreds of thousands of supporters converged on the capital. The students had started the protest, hoping to cleanse the party of graft and corruption and encourage free speech. They sought reform, not revolution. After all, they were, by and large, the children of the elite. But as their movement spread outwards to the middle classes and then to the workers and peasants, attitudes hardened.

JIM LAURIE, Fmr. ABC News Correspondent: The move from student uprising, if you will, to a worker uprising is what really scared the Chinese government. They felt that they could deal with the students. After all, students had been involved in uprisings for many, many years. But where it became dangerous to the stability and to the survival of the Communist Party was when ordinary workers became involved.

HAN DONGFANG, Editor, China Labour Bulletin: *[through interpreter]* After all, the Chinese Communist Party had originally used the workers' movement to gain power for itself. Now those in government were terrified that we'd take it back from them.

ANTHONY THOMAS: In fact, the government was paralyzed by infighting between those who advocated peaceful negotiation and hard-liners who demanded a crackdown. On May the 19th, Zhou Ziyang, the reformist general secretary of the Communist Party, suddenly appeared in Tiananmen Square to appeal for compromise. It would be his last public appearance.



That night, before an audience of party faithful, hard-line Premier Li Peng showed the way forward. "We must end the situation immediately. Otherwise, the future of the People's Republic will be in grave danger." He completed his address with a declaration of martial law. Troops would occupy the city and put an end to the protests in Tiananmen Square.

Never before in the 40-year history of communist rule had China put its citizens and its army in this situation.

ROBIN MUNRO: It was a massive display of force, 300,000 troops by most counts, countless tanks, APCs, the lot, all converging on the city from every quarter.

ANTHONY THOMAS: Beijing's response came as a complete surprise both to the army and to the government.

JAN WONG: The people just flooded out and physically, with their sheer numbers, simply blocked the road.

ORVILLE SCHELL, Dean, UC Berkeley Journalism School: Flood tactics. You know, flooding them with people, so they couldn't move. The, army at that point, wasn't willing to run over people and shoot people   to their credit.

ROBIN MUNRO: The scene that greeted my eyes was just unbelievable. I could see for about a mile in the distance endless serried ranks of transport trucks completely surrounded by tens of thousands of people. Young women, middle-aged housewives, elderly retired workers said "You're not coming in. Sorry, this is our city. There's no chaos. Leave us alone."

Prof. TIMOTHY BROOK, Univ. of British Columbia: So there are three or four major military convoys in the suburbs of Beijing that can't go forward to Tiananmen Square. They also can't withdraw. They had them fixed there and imposed on them a 24, 48-hour street seminar to explain to them why they shouldn't be doing what they're doing.

WOMAN: *[subtitles]* Brother soldiers! Do you know anything about what we are doing? Brother soldiers, you should be defenders of the people.

TONG YI: And I witnessed a mother with an infant talk face to face with the soldiers in the truck, telling him it was a very peaceful city and that what we did was to just ask for more freedom for the people.

ORVILLE SCHELL: So you had these wonderfully sort of touching moments of the people appealing to the army to join them, and feeding them and giving them water, and saying you know, "Could be your son, could be your daughter."

LU JINGHUA, Former Beijing Resident: *[through interpreter]* The citizens were also quite clever. They brought their children and asked them to say to the soldiers, "How are you, Uncle Soldier?" The soldiers were touched and they said, "We won't kill our people."

ORVILLE SCHELL: And these sort of doe-eyed, puzzled soldiers, who were mostly country people, weren't experienced with big city life, wondering what was going on here and not wanting to hurt anybody.

ANTONY THOMAS: Four days after the attempted entry, the army withdrew to bases outside the city. Beijing was euphoric.

ORVILLE SCHELL: So that ended very well and was a great triumph. But it also was an enormous humiliation for the leadership. They had been thwarted and they had lost face, and they weren't going to let it happen again.

JOHN POMFRET, The Washington Post: The party elders feared that the whole edifice of communism was going to collapse, like it was collapsing in the Soviet Union and in other parts of Eastern Europe. They needed to make a stand ♦♦ and a bloody stand ♦♦ to show their population, in effect, to cow their population back into submission.

ANTONY THOMAS: Over the next 10 days, Supreme Leader Deng Xiaoping hatched a new plan. Troops armed with semi-automatic weapons and backed by tanks were drawn from military districts across China.

[www.pbs.org: See a timeline of the confrontation]

ROBIN MUNRO: On the night of June 3rd, a huge invasion force, coming in, again, from all directions but mostly from the west, this time with live ammunition, this time strict orders: the square must be cleared by dawn on June 4th.

Prof. PERRY LINK, Princeton University: The instructions to the troops said, "We don't want bloodshed. Avoid bloodshed." But the other instruction to the troops, which was iron-clad, was, "The square has to be cleared by 6:00 AM." No bloodshed on the one hand, have to clear the square on the other. "Here's your tanks. Here's your ammunition." And so I think the soldiers were caught in a dilemma.

ANTONY THOMAS: To block the army's advance, the citizens barricaded all the main road bridges and intersections with buses, trucks, heavy earth-moving equipment, anything they could lay their hands on.

Muxidi bridge. In 1989, all traffic entering the city from the west had to cross here. The nearby exit ramp didn't exist, but the apartments were here, homes to senior government bureaucrats, who would have a ringside view of a massacre that began in the early evening of June the 3rd as the crowds manning the barricade on Muxidi bridge hurled rocks and abuse at the advancing army.

JOHN POMFRET, The Washington Post: Armored personnel carriers came and they began to ram the buses. Somebody threw some type of gasoline-soaked rug into the buses, and the buses illuminated with fire. Then, sometime after 9:30, you had more soldiers out there and live fire began.

Prof. TIMOTHY BROOK, Univ. of British Columbia: The first rounds of fire catch everybody by surprise. The people in the streets don't expect this to happen.

TONG YI: They shot, you know, randomly towards all sorts of directions. Two people, one meter in front of me, were shot down.

ZHOU FENGSHUO: *[through interpreter]* Angry citizens were everywhere. People just couldn't understand why this country and its army, the People's Army, would slaughter its own people, the Beijing citizens.

Prof. TIMOTHY BROOK: People still pour into the streets. This is the amazing thing. People were just so angry, so furious at what was happening in their city that they were not going to step back and let the army do what it was doing.

XION YANG: *[through interpreter]* A young friend standing next to me shouted, "Overthrow fascism!" Then the soldiers started shooting at us. We immediately threw ourselves to the ground.

JOHN POMFRET: The group of people I was with, they were Chinese people, began to run. I basically hit the dirt and snuggled up against the curb while the shooting was happening. I could see people behind me falling.

JIM LAURIE, Fmr. ABC News Correspondent: Troops began to fire in all different directions. Many people ♦♦ children, women, ordinary people ♦♦ were shot standing on their balconies, looking down at this spectacle.

JAN WONG: They just raked the buildings with their gunfire and they were shooting people. People were being killed on ♦♦ you know, in their own kitchens.

JIM LAURIE: Everybody was frightened by this overwhelming use of force.

JAN WONG: What was amazing was that the army used battlefield weapons. These bullets are the size of a man's thumb, and they're encased with this copper sort of soft outer coating that, when it's fired, it unfurls and twists. They're like dum-dums, I guess. They twist, so when they go through the victim, they tear up the victim inside.

Prof. TIMOTHY BROOK: It's the kind of ammunition an army wants in the field because it creates ♦♦ it creates much damage and incapacitates the other side because of the medical burden of dealing with this kind of casualty. It's not the sort of thing that should be used in an urban setting.

XION YANG: *[through interpreter]* Right in front us, this tall young man, about 20 years old, suddenly fell down. He'd been shot in the chest. Blood was pouring out. We were absolutely shocked. We didn't know how to stop the bleeding. Someone found a bicycle to carry him to the hospital.

JOHN POMFRET: You had doctors outside involved in mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, with red faces from ♦♦ you know, stained from blood.

XION YANG: *[through interpreter]* We saw more than 30 bodies lying on the ground in front of the hospital. All the doctors were in a state of shock, completely lost.

JIM LAURIE: I visited three hospitals very close to the Muxidi area, and we were in total shock because of the large numbers of people, wounded, being brought to these facilities, mostly being brought on bicycle-pulled carts. And all around us, we could hear gunfire.

JAN WONG: We went into the hospital through the back entrance, where the staff goes. There was a smell. My friend said, "Do you smell that?" And I said, "I smell something sweet." And she said, "That's death. That's what you're smelling."

JIM LAURIE: People started to scream at us, "Take pictures! Take video! Tell the world what's going on. They're killing innocent people."

ANTONY THOMAS: Changan Avenue cuts right across the city and was the main route of the army's advance from the east and the west. On the night of June 3rd, it was barricaded and defended at every major intersection.

[www.pbs.org: Read the eyewitness accounts]

JZHOU FENG SUO, Former Student Leader: *[through interpreter]* From Muxidi, all along Changan Avenue, it was like a war zone. The debris of battle, the smoke, was everywhere.

Prof. TIMOTHY BROOK: Every time a blockade was knocked down going east from Muxidi, another one would be set up at the next major intersection. So the army had to plow its way through a series of blockades. Sometimes it's breaking through buses and trucks that have been strewn across the street. In other cases, it's breaking through human barriers, and they have to be shot.

ROBIN MUNRO: Basically, it was a one-sided pitched battle all the way from the western suburbs until they finally, several hours later, about 1:30 AM, began to arrive at Tiananmen Square, which was ground zero. This was the crunch time. We knew that the troops had orders to clear the square by dawn. That was the deadline.

JOHN POMFRET: We heard this roar of male yelling and saw on the steps of the Museum of Revolutionary History and then across the way, on the steps of the Great Hall of the People, thousands of soldiers, just saw the glint of their weaponry. And it was clear to everyone from that point on that we were absolutely trapped. You had the military coming in from the west with their tanks. We knew there were tanks coming in from the south of Tiananmen Gate. And now on both sides of the square, you had hundreds, if not thousands of soldiers.

ANTONY THOMAS: And then the firing started. Even at this late stage, many couldn't believe the army was using live ammunition, and they stood their ground.

JAN WONG: And you'd just hear this thunderous sound of gunfire. All the gunfire kept going. You could see tracer bullets in the sky. There was a battle going on, and there were only civilians. And they were the targets.

LU JINGHUA, Former Beijing resident: *[through interpreter]* One man was shot down. Someone ran up and dragged that man. I didn't. I just kept running. On my left side, someone was hit in the neck. Everyone was running.

JOHN POMFRET: There was a lot of shooting. A lot of young people were running towards the military, being shot or falling and then running away.

JAN WONG: People were running to the square and they were running from the square. And people were racing into the square and bikes racing out of the square and bikes the ambulances started to go in.

JOHN POMFRET: There was a lot of smoke. The lights were on in the square. And there was this continual announcement of, "Under the martial law regulations, no one should be on the street. If you stay on the street, you will be responsible for what happens to you," this sort of continual bass beat, sort of of that evening was that these announcements.

ROBIN MUNRO: About 4:15 in the morning, suddenly, all the lights in The Square went out pitch dark. This was very frightening.

T.D. ALLMAN: And then I heard these horrible crushing sounds, like when tanks run over things crushing, splinter sounds.

ROBIN MUNRO: After about 10 minutes, the lights came on again, but not the normal lights of the Square. They stayed off. Instead, they put on the special display lights that lit up the Great Hall of the People. It was like this Goetterdaemmerung effect of this vast, cavernous Great Hall of the People lit up by floodlights and smoke rising all around. And at that point, we could see just a river of troops flowing out of the Great Hall of the People onto the steps and deploying in front of the Monument to the People's Heroes.

ANTONY THOMAS: The students had made their last stand at the monument. They had witnessed the shooting and killing as the army swept through the square towards them, and many expected the same treatment themselves. But they were wrong. The soldiers held their fire, and the students were offered amnesty if they vacated the square at once.

JOHN POMFRET: "Should we stay or should we go" was put to a voice vote among the students there. It was clear to me that the stay votes were much, much, much stronger. But Feng Congde, who was a student leader at the time, said "The go's have it."



FENG CONGDE: *[through interpreter]* From my point of view, the important thing was to avoid more injury and death, so I made the decision to lead the students out of the square. 3,000 to 5,000 students and citizens left the square by the southeast corner.

ZHOU FENG SUO: *[through interpreter]* All the students held hands and started singing The Internationale and soothed each other with the belief that one day, we would be back.

ROBIN MUNRO: I'll never forget those faces, the young people's faces. They were walking out with their heads held high. They'd finessed their retreat from the square so well. They'd performed so bravely. And finally, they'd they'd made the right decision. There would have been no point staying there. Everyone would have been killed.



ROBIN MUNRO: Reports in the week after June 4th stated that troops had assaulted the monument and massacred all the students on the monument. Thousands of students had been shot down in cold blood.

That didn't happen. And had it happened, I wouldn't be here today. Simple as that. The theater of the massacre was, by and large, elsewhere. It was the rest of the city, and that was where the Beijing citizens fought and died.

T.D. ALLMAN:: Later that morning, amazing things started to happen. People, astonishingly, started trying   holding hands, walking up the avenue, trying to re-enter the square in the face of these tanks.



JONATHAN MIRSKY, Author and Journalist: These people were frantic. They were nuts, out of their minds. And the reason they were out of their minds is that these were the parents of students who had been in the square that night. These parents were running back and forth, and they were saying, "We want to go in the square. We're looking for our children." Then an officer came out with a loud-hailer, and he said, "I'm going to count to five, and then we're going to fire."



JAN WONG: Then all the people realized that the guns were pointed at them, and they'd go running past the hotel. And then the soldiers would fire in their backs. I felt like I was watching some terrible opera.

JONATHAN MIRSKY: And a lot of people went down   30, 40, 50 people are knocked down. Everybody else ran away. I'm lying in the grass, thinking this is the worst thing ever. This is hell.

JAN WONG: But the odd thing was that after a little while, like, 40 minutes, an hour, people would gather their nerve again and crawl back to the corner and start screaming at the soldiers. And then the commander would eventually give another signal and the soldiers would raise their rifles again. And the people would go, "Oh, my God!" And they'd run away, and they'd shoot more in the backs. And this went on more than half a dozen times in the day. It was to me unbelievable.

JONATHAN MIRSKY: There then suddenly appeared right there an ambulance, and they rush in amongst all the people who were on the ground. And the soldiers open fire again and mow them down.

JAN WONG: The soldiers shot everybody   doctors, nurses, rescuers. Everybody was being shot at.

JONATHAN MIRSKY: This was seen by numbers of journalists, who will never forget it. This was   this was a real massacre. This was the targeting and the shooting down of totally non-violent innocent civilians.

ROBIN MUNRO: The tactics of overwhelming force that were used had a point. They were meant to shock, terrify and awe. And they did. Terror works.

ANTONY THOMAS: No one knows for certain how many people died. The Chinese Red Cross initially reported 2,600 and immediately retracted under intense government pressure. The official government figure is 241 dead, including 23 officers and soldiers, and 7,000 wounded. All we can be sure of is that by the third day, June the 5th, the army was in complete control. Beijing seemed utterly vanquished until an unknown young man made his astounding gesture of defiance.

ROBIN MUNRO: The symbolism of what he did was overwhelmingly clear. He spoke for the Beijing people.

ROBIN MUNRO: Before June 4th, you had millions of people, all over China in the cities, up in the streets, peacefully demanding more rights, freedom, democracy, press freedom, end to corruption. After June 4th, what did you have? You had one man, one sacrificial figure almost, who took it on himself to speak for everyone else, who had been silenced by that time.

ANTONY THOMAS: But what happened to that young man? The only clue comes in the last few seconds, when he was hustled away by four men. Their identity is key, but those who witnessed that moment had very different impressions.

T.D. ALLMAN:: We don't know who those people were. And you know, maybe they saved him. Things like that happened all over Beijing in those days. People were wounded, people would pick them up and take them to the streets. People would take people into their homes.

CHARLES COLE, Photojournalist: I feel very strongly that it was Public Security Bureau people that got him. They were on the rooftops with binoculars and walkie-talkies, and they were controlling the outer areas of the square, as you would control any military operation, the high ground. It seemed like they had snatch teams of people they were conducting down below. Even if it wasn't PSB, I seriously doubt he could have gotten past the net of security.

ANTONY THOMAS: Well, if it was the PSB who took him to one side, what would have been his fate?

CHARLES COLE: Well, I felt pretty strongly that he was executed. We saw a lot of public executions put on Chinese TV shortly after that, and it was for people that had done far less offenses than embarrass the government in such a way.

ANTONY THOMAS: In the aftermath of the Beijing massacre, tens of thousands all across the country were arrested. Unknown numbers were executed. Some are still in prison today. China television portrayed these people as counter-revolutionaries, hooligans and agents of foreign powers. But they never produced the young protester, who'd become the most powerful symbol of resistance to the regime. Could that possibly be a cause for hope?

JAN WONG: I don't think they had him, or they would have, at that stage, displayed him. I think that the people who took the Tank Man away were concerned people. If you've ever seen security people manhandle a Chinese citizen, they're really brutal. They twist your arm. They make you bend over. They punch you a few times. They kick you. So to me, I think he was helped to the side of the road. He wasn't being arrested.

ANTONY THOMAS: [on camera] That raises the intriguing possibility that he's still alive.

JAN WONG: I think that he is. The fact that we have not heard from him since that amazing incident tells me he's still alive. He's still there. He has not been caught, and he's certainly not telling anybody that he's the man.

ANTONY THOMAS: [voice-over] If Tank Man has survived, where is he now?

Since the day he made his heroic stand, his country has changed beyond recognition. Old economic dogmas were cast aside. To attract foreign capital, China's leaders created 2,000 special economic zones and removed many restrictions on foreign ownership and investment. The results were dramatic. Fifteen years ago, this entire skyline didn't exist, just paddy fields. China's rise is the story of the 21st century, and it is rooted in the events of 1989.

ORVILLE SCHELL: This was Deng Xiaoping's great moment of genius. After the massacre of 1989, he, in effect, said, "We will not stop economic reform. We will, in effect, halt political reform." What he basically said to people was, "Folks, you're in a room. There are two doors. One door says politics, one door says economics. If you open the economic door, you're on your own. You can go the full distance, do basically whatever you want, get wealthy, help your family, have a bright future, move forward into a glorious future. If you open the political door, you're going to run right into one obstruction after another, and you're going to run into the state."

[www.pbs.org: More on Tiananmen's legacy]

ROBIN MUNRO: There was a point to that. This was meant to buy the Communist Party a new lease on life on the one hand, intimidate opposition for a generation, on the other hand, give the people bread and circuses. And the deal is there must be no challenge to one-party rule. That's the terms of today's China. That's the deal.

ANTONY THOMAS: And for those who rose against the regime in 1989 principally city people the deal has paid off. After decades of austerity, they have access to everything that money can buy. No dream seems unattainable here, no expense too daunting.

And the speed of the change is breathtaking. The high-speed train from Shanghai airport to the city uses a technology developed in Germany but considered far too expensive to be practical. But it stands as an important symbol of China's aspirations, no matter if the train is often empty.

Underpinning these visionary projects is an economy hurtling forward at a staggering rate of 9 percent a year, as China sucks draws in hundreds of billions of dollars of foreign investment.

Whole production lines have been moved out of the United States and Europe and set up here, turning China into a factory for the world. Thousands of the most familiar western brands toys, textiles, electronic goods are now made in China. We do the research and marketing, they actually make the stuff.

China has overtaken the United States as the world's largest consumer of coal, steel, meat and grain. Within the past five years, its oil demand has doubled. It is the world's second largest car market, and in a decade, could be the world's largest.

ORVILLE SCHELL: It's an amazing miracle, what has happened since 1989. And anyone such as myself standing there during those weeks couldn't have imagined in their wildest imagination that come 2006, China would be where it is today, and the party would still be enthroned.

ANTONY THOMAS: Never in the course of human history has a larger number of people gained more wealth in such a short time. Since 1989, China has seen the emergence of a new middle class, estimated at over 200 million people.

Prof. TIMOTHY BROOK: And the improvements have been extraordinary, been massive. So I think a lot of people have been willing to accept this deal with the devil, to say, "All right, things went very badly in 1989, but in a sense, we have been rewarded by not asking the government to return to that event and account for the way in which it conducted itself."

JOHN POMFRET: That social contract, if you will, up to this point, has worked quite well for the Communist Party and for the elite and now the new middle class of China.

ANTONY THOMAS: But what about the ordinary men and women on the factory floor, those whose labor keeps this economy on the fast track? If Tank Man were really a worker, where would he be in the new China?

Maybe here, if he's lucky, in one of the huge joint ventures with Western corporations enticed into the China market by generous tax concessions, a disciplined work force and a potential market of 1.3 billion consumers.

The average pay here is equivalent to \$600 a month meager by Western standards, serious money for an ordinary worker in China.

Others are less fortunate. When the old state-owned industries were brought to their knees, 30 million people lost their jobs and had to find their place in the new competitive market economy.

This state-owned steel works was saved. It had to be. It was the only real employer in a one-industry town. Under new management, output has increased five-fold, but 40,000 workers have lost their jobs. The company school, the company hospital, the company nursery all closed down.

If Tank Man had worked for a state-owned industry, where might he be now, seizing his opportunities in the new China, or struggling to survive?

NICHOLAS BEQUELIN, Human Rights Watch: There really seem to be two Chinas today, China A and China B. China A is big cities, where businessmen and foreign governments go Beijing, Guangdong, Shanghai, Shenzhen modern, and confronting a lot of the problems that developed countries are facing, problems of urbanization, too many cars, the rise of criminalization, the education and health systems, the judicial system. These are sort of problems for developed rich or getting richer country. And then you have China B, the underdeveloped or developing China, which is the vast majority of the country. And this China is still very poor, not getting better because all the economic growth is concentrated in the cities. They face problems that are really problems for developing countries very low education, not enough water, not enough economic resources, not enough infrastructure. It's a profoundly unequal system, and it's a system whose contradictions we see every day are playing out more and more.

ANTONY THOMAS: We are in Anhui province, 300 miles and several centuries from Shanghai. It's a dizzying descent from the skyscrapers and freeways, the glittering boutiques and futuristic train to this. And yet there have been changes here, real changes for the better. Under the old collective system, peasants were virtually slaves of the state. Now they own or rather lease their plots and are free to sell their produce on the open market. As a result of these reforms, rural incomes doubled within a decade. But the trouble is that what the state gave with one hand, it has taken away with the other.

NICHOLAS BEQUELIN: Education and health care, which are the two main benchmarks for the advancement and progress of a society at large, have totally collapsed in the past 20 years. Education used to be free and accessible for every child in China, but now there is not one kid in China that doesn't have to pay to go to school ♦♦ not only the school fees, but the book fees, the heating fees, an array of fees.

Prof. PERRY LINK, Princeton University: Children of farmers in rural areas just can't go to school now because they can't afford it. You have to pay. And then they can't afford to pay health care. Something like less than a penny in American money per year in the rural areas is spent on health care. It's virtually gone. It's just not there. So if you get sick, you depend on local herbal remedies and folklore or die.

NICHOLAS BEQUELIN: It really begs the question what is in the mind of the Chinese leaders. Is it to make China a rich and powerful country on the international scene, or is it to try to bring into the 21st century the entire Chinese population?

ANTONY THOMAS: There are almost a billion people in China, including at least 750 million peasant farmers and their families. What's so striking here is not just the sense of timelessness, but the absence of young adults. Zhang Mei has three sons, who have all left to work in the industrial areas. She sees them once a year, if she's lucky. This little boy is a grandson. Quin Tang also has three sons and a daughter working hundreds of miles away.

QUIN TANG: *[through interpreter]* You just can't make a living from farming here. You have to go away and find work.

ANTONY THOMAS: In recent surveys, the number one reason migrants give for leaving their homes and families is to pay for the education of their children. In March 2006, the government promised to work to remedy the situation by injecting a further \$5 billion in the rural economy over the next 12 months. That's almost \$7 a head, probably not enough to turn back the human tide.

Everywhere you look in China, peasants are on the move, the flow and counter-flow of hundreds of millions of people willing to accept working conditions and wages that give this economy its competitive edge. It is the largest migration in history and the basis of the China's industrial strength.

Forty thousand migrants work here in Sanxingchen, a new industrial center that has grown from a village in less than 10 years. The trend now is for specialization, one city per product. So China has a sock city, a toothbrush city, an underwear city, and here in Sanxingchen, a bedding city, making comforters, pillows and sheets for the world.

The Sanxingchen employers are beneficiaries of the post-Tiananmen deal. Some at the top end have exploited party connections, others have risen from the humblest backgrounds and now own a back-street workshop or two. What they all share in the bedding business is a preference for young female workers.

Prof. ANITA CHAN, Australian National University: Factory employers like to hire young people because they are more energetic, they are fresh, they can work faster. That's why, when they recruit workers, they look at their health. It's very important to make sure they are strong and fit. You don't want to hire sickly workers. A lot of factories do not even have one day off. That means seven days a week, thirteen hours a day.

ANTONY THOMAS: Typical pay for migrants working these hours, about \$120 a month.

Dr. ANITA CHAN: They work them like this for maybe five, six or seven years, and then either they get sick, they get tired, and they leave on their own, or the factory manager management will fire them, if they are not up to the speed.

ANTONY THOMAS: Life for most of these workers is confined to the factory floor and a dormitory in a migrants' hostel. Sanxingchen is encircled with hostels ♦♦ some of them squalid, some others indescribable.

We were allowed to film at the modern Jiangsu Dadao factory. Here top-quality bed linen is woven for clients from Russia and the Far East to the United States, and the girls who make the stuff sleep 12 to a room.

Three of the brightest were taken off the factory floor and were ready and waiting for our interview. Qiju, aged 20, is from Anhui province, where we had just come from. Qiju spoke glowingly of her job in this new modern factory. But were these her real feelings? Impossible to know, with all interviews monitored by government minders.

QIJU: *[through interpreter]* We're paid regularly. We never have to work after 9:00 PM. And the food is much better than anywhere I've worked before.

ANTONY THOMAS: In spite of the heavy presence in the wings, the girls gradually opened up and gave us a glimpse into their real lives. Jin Li is from Jiangxi province, 500 miles to the south.

JIN LI: *[through interpreter]* I'm working here to help my family. Where I come from, all we have is farming.

ANTONY THOMAS: Hongyan is the veteran of the group at 22

HONGYAN: *[through interpreter]* I send all the money I earn back home to pay the school fees for my brother and sister. But what I earn is still not enough. Maybe I'd earn more in another country.

ANTONY THOMAS: And then Qiju opened up.

QIJU: *[through interpreter]* I just wish the pay here was better, that the factory would be developed and improved. But at least it's better than the last place I worked in. When they were busy, we had to work on right through the night. Some of my friends just couldn't keep going and just fell asleep, right there in front of the machines.

HAN DONGFANG, Editor, China Labour Bulletin: *[through interpreter]* The problems that workers face in China are not just low pay or long hours. Workers have no basic rights. They don't even have the right to negotiate with management.

ANTONY THOMAS: Now exiled, Han Dongfan broadcasts a regular phone-in program to mainland China. Today he's talking to workers who make sofas for a European company.

HAN DONGFAN: *[through interpreter]* When the workers recently protested a 20 percent wage cut, their leaders were beaten up. Now some of them are suffering severe health problems. We think it's a glue, sprayed in the production process.

ANTONY THOMAS: The Chinese authorities have tried to jam these broadcasts. Han is considered an enemy of the state. In 1989, he was elected to lead an independent trades union that set up headquarters in Tiananmen Square. When his face appeared on the TV wanted lists broadcast across he China, he says he simply walked into a police station and said, "Here I am, and I've done nothing wrong." Brutalized, kept in solitary and then forced to share a tiny cell with prisoners suffering from infectious diseases, Han nearly died.

HAN DONGFAN: *[through interpreter]* Workers in China are cheated, deceived, not fully informed, and they have no rights. All workers are facing the same situation, whether they are working in privately owned companies, foreign companies or reformed state-owned industries ♦♦ no statutory pension, no compensation for injury, no sick pay. And because of the long hours, accidents can happen at any time ♦♦ loss of fingers, even limbs. Another issue is the condition in which they work, handling toxic materials, breathing in toxic dust without any protection.

XIAO QIANG, China Internet Project, UC Berkeley: These are the people are losers in the China's economic growth. And the population of them are vast. And they don't have a voice. They don't have anyone to address them. They don't have a social mechanism to sort of advocate on their behalf. They do not have a government that ever listen to them at all.

ANTONY THOMAS: Migrant workers arriving at the site of the main stadium for the 2008 Beijing Olympics. It's highly unlikely, though, that any of them will be around to watch the games. Migrant workers are subject to strict residency laws, necessary prevention, in the government's view, against mass migration and the creation of urban slums. To remain here legally, migrants must live without their dependents in single-sex hostels. When the job is done, they must find another or move on.

NICHOLAS BEQUELIN: This system explain how China has been able to concentrate so much wealth and development in the cities ♦♦ all these glittering buildings that you see everywhere, all this prosperity, order and cleanliness ♦♦ because it has denied the very people who built this any enjoyment of the benefits of the cities. So they will come, contribute their work, get paid very menial, very minimal wages, but then they will have to leave or try to lie low in the city because they're not entitled to residency.

ANTONY THOMAS: Although, there is no evidence of abuse on the Olympic sites, for construction workers elsewhere in China, it's a very different story.

Prof. ANITA CHAN, Australian National University: They go to a site, and they work and work and they're not paid at all. They are given food because you need to eat before you can work. You know, it's hard labor. But they are not paid. The arrangement is that you will be paid at the end of the year.

ANTONY THOMAS: Anita Chan has been researching working conditions inside China for 15 years.

Prof. ANITA CHAN: And if at the end of the year, either the boss, the construction company or the gang boss default on you, that means you are not paid. And that is so common. There have been cases of construction workers trying to commit suicide, trying to draw attention by going up to some construction sites and threatening to throw themselves down. A lot of these construction workers are working for the state sector, building government buildings. And in the end, it's the workers who are at the end, who are at the bottom of the ♦♦ you know, of the heap, and so they are not paid.

ORVILLE SCHELL: China's paradox now is that, you know, a larger quotient of people than at any time in the last 50 years has moved forward and are economically better off. But there's a huge number which have really stagnated.

NICHOLAS BEQUELIN: What you see in China is this pool of resentment, this growing pool of resentment from the Chinese underclass that is progressively spreading over China.

ORVILLE SCHELL: There's a huge amount of tension. It's like a land of a thousand earthquake faults. And one of these faults is between the rich and the poor, between peasants and the party, between corrupt officials and the people.

NICHOLAS BEQUELIN: Time is running out. The level of unrest in China is rising.

XIAO QIANG: At the end of last year, the Public Security Ministry declared the number of the demonstrations was 74,000 nationwide, but a year before was 50,000, and this number is increasing.

ANTONY THOMAS: The figure for 2005 has risen further to 87,000 incidents. All over China, the pressure is building. Here peasants, defending their land from takeover by a power company, are beaten, stabbed and shot by hired thugs ♦♦ one incident in June of last year that happened to be recorded by a villager who was able to smuggle his tape out of the country ♦♦ one incident in June 1989 that happened to take place under the very noses of Western cameramen.

The challenge of powerful images for an authoritarian state is enormous. How do you stop one person's example becoming an inspiration to others? How do you prevent the fire from spreading?

Beida, the University of Beijing, and the most prestigious in all of China. In 1989, Beida was the nerve center of the student movement that would inspire a popular uprising. Today's undergraduates enjoy all the benefits that have flowed into China A. Largely the children of the elite, they enjoy freedom of travel and a lifestyle many Western undergraduates might envy. But what do they know of their recent history?

[on camera] I'm going to try a little experiment. Show this picture around and tell me what that picture says to you. Pass them around.

[voice-over] They were baffled. After a long silence, one of them whispered ♦♦

XIANG YUE: Looks like some military ceremony.

ANTONY THOMAS: The boy whispered back:

WEI KE: It was '89.

ANTONY THOMAS: But the girl made no connection.

[on camera] Does it have any meaning at all?

XIANG YUE: *[through interpreter]* Well, I can see four vehicles. I'm not sure about the context. It might be a parade or something. I really don't know. I'm just guessing.

YU SHAN: *[through interpreter]* I really can't tell anything from this picture. There's no context.

WEI KE: *[through interpreter]* Is this a piece of artwork? Did you make this up?

ANTONY THOMAS: *[voice-over]* Whatever they may have heard about 1989, it was clear that they had never seen the Tank Man picture.

ROBIN MUNRO: I think it's terribly tragic that Beijing University students, who were at the forefront of the May 1989 democracy movement, several generations of students later have no conception of what happened, don't even know that this incident of the man in front of the tanks ever happened.

ANTONY THOMAS: Tragic indeed, but not surprising. The image was shown once, in 1989 on China Television, re-branded as an example of the army's restraint.

CHINA TELEVISION ANNOUNCER: *[subtitles]* Anyone with common sense can see that if our tanks were determined to move on, this lone scoundrel could never have stopped them. This scene flies in the face of Western propaganda. It proves that our soldiers exercised the highest degree of restraint.

ANTONY THOMAS: But the picture was quickly withdrawn and never shown again. No one under 20 in China is likely to have seen it.

ORVILLE SCHELL: One way the Chinese government has managed to control the dialogue and the discussion of the past is by controlling the media and publishing, and that it's done quite effectively. And it's no accident that this is an area that they are least willing to relent and to compromise, as these other rather amazing reforms go forward in the country.

ANTONY THOMAS: Any regime attempting to combine economic freedom with rigid one-party rule is faced with a challenge. How do you allow in all the information necessary to keep a free market economy running, while filtering out anything that contradicts the party line and undermines its authority?

Press censorship is one thing, but China already has 111 million Internet users, monitored by at least 30,000 Internet police. For more sophisticated controls, China relies on Western technology. When we in the West search for images of Tiananmen Square on Google, photos of Tank Man pop up immediately. Move through the selection of 18 pages, and Tank Man appears again and again.

When people in China make the same entry on their Google search engine, they get just three pages, featuring maps, architecture, cooking hints and smiling tourists posing in the square. But not one single image of the Tank Man.

NICHOLAS BEQUELIN: All the major IT companies in the West have not only embraced the Chinese market, they have bent over backwards to please the Chinese government. They have proposed to tailor their information system to fit the political censorship needs. Yahoo! have very early on signed a self-censorship pledge. Google and others have followed.

JONATHAN MIRSKY: These companies are absolutely capable either of caving into the Chinese, or worse, in the case of Yahoo! and Cisco just to take those two of providing them with the technology to identify people and messages that the Chinese don't like. And we already know that at least one person, a person called Shi Tao, has been arrested in China because of this.

ANTONY THOMAS: Shi Tao was a journalist. His crime, forwarding to a New York web site Chinese government instructions on how their media should cover the 16th anniversary of the Beijing massacre.

FENG CONGDE, Human Rights in China: *[through interpreter]* Yahoo! supplied all the necessary information to the Chinese government, including the time the e-mail was sent, the IP address and the corresponding PC he used. Shi Tao was arrested and put in jailed for 10 years.

[www.pbs.org: More on China and the Internet]

ANTONY THOMAS: In February 2006, representatives of Yahoo!, Google, Cisco and Microsoft appeared before a congressional committee, accused of being accomplices of oppression.

Rep. CHRISTOPHER SMITH (R), New Jersey: Leading U.S. companies like Google, Yahoo!, Cisco and Microsoft have compromised both the integrity of their product and their duties as responsible corporate citizens.

ELLIOT SCHRAGE, V.P., Google Inc.: We have determined that we can do the most for our users and do more to expand access to information if we accept the censorship restrictions required by Chinese law. Our decision to create a presence, any presence, inside of China was a difficult one. Self-censorship like that which we are now required to perform in China is something that conflicts deeply with our core principles.

Rep. JIM LEACH (R), Iowa: If this Congress wanted to learn how to censor, we go to you, the company that should symbolize the greatest freedom of information in the history of man.

ELLIOT SCHRAGE: This was not something that we did enthusiastically, or not something that we're proud of at all.

ANTONY THOMAS: No one had tougher questions to answer than Yahoo!

Rep. CHRISTOPHER SMITH: Women and men are going to the gulag and being tortured as a direct result of information handed over to Chinese officials. When Yahoo! was asked to explain its actions, Yahoo! said that it must adhere to local laws in all countries where it operates.

MICHAEL CALLAHAN, Sr. V.P., Yahoo! Inc.: The Shi Tao case. The facts of the Shi Tao case are distressing to our company, our employees and our leadership. When Yahoo! China in Beijing was required to provide information about a user, who we later learned was Shi Tao, we had no information about the identity of the user or the nature of the investigation. At the time the demand was made for information in this case, Yahoo! China was legally obligated to comply with the requirements of Chinese law enforcement.

Rep. CHRISTOPHER SMITH: My response to that is, if the secret police a half century ago asked where Anne Frank was hiding, would the correct answer be to hand over the information in order to comply with local laws?

ANTONY THOMAS: It is that aspect, direct cooperation between Western corporations and the Chinese police, that is of greatest concern.

HARRY WU, China Information Center: China have a national program, so-called Golden Shield program. It means try to upgrade and modernize the police control system.

ANTONY THOMAS: Posing as a provider of surveillance technology and database management, exiled dissident Harry Wu contacted local police authorities across China. He says that time after time, he was told he was too late. They already had the latest technology from the American corporation Cisco.

HARRY WU: Cisco signed a contract with the provincial security department one after the other one. In their proposal, they say very clear that, "We help you make your work more effective." Patrol car to patrol car connection, patrol car to police station connection, include the voice identification, image identification, fingerprints identification. They're training Chinese police to control the country, control the people.

ANTONY THOMAS: Cisco declined an interview but issued a written statement: "Cisco sells identical products world-wide. It is the customer, not Cisco, who determines how the specific capabilities will be used." But Harry Wu wonders whether Cisco is violating the law.

HARRY WU: American have the law since 1989, not allowed to sell any products to China about the detective or crime control.

ANTONY THOMAS: The law forbids the sale of any crime control or detection instruments or equipment to China. But Cisco says this means "equipment such as shotguns, police helmets and handcuffs. Networking products are not covered by this legislation."

But under pressure from Harry Wu and Congress, the administration and the State Department are now reexamining the rules under which technology companies should operate in China.

But the technology is already there. It has helped make Tank Man disappear. And if another should emerge, that technology would could facilitate a swift arrest.

But in 1989, this lone defiance was an enigma, and the world's press wanted a name for the hero. After three weeks of speculation, news broke. He was named in an English Sunday newspaper as Wang Wei Lin, the 19 year-old son of a Beijing factory worker. Journalist Alfred Lee claimed that friends of the young man say said they'd spotted him shaven-headed and paraded on state television.

Following his world exclusive, Alfred Lee was congratulated by British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, and the name he gave the Tank Man has been used by journalists and commentators ever since.

ALFRED LEE, Journalist: I published the name Wang Wei Lin after speaking to three excellent contacts that I had in Beijing. These contacts were very close to what was happening at Tiananmen Square at the time. I knew that once his name had come into the public domain, the Chinese authorities wouldn't be able to do anything to him. They couldn't execute him. It would have brought outrage from the world.

ANTONY THOMAS: Experienced China journalists are deeply skeptical about the story and the name Wang Wei Lin.

JAN WONG, The Globe and Mail, Toronto: I didn't believe it because, you know, it's great to have a scoop, but if no one can follow it, if no one can match it, then it doesn't exist. None of the resident correspondents in Beijing, many of whom are fluent in Chinese and have many sources, many connections, all kinds of information, no one could match it. I also took into account that the journalist who reported the story was not a resident foreign correspondent in Beijing.

ANTONY THOMAS: Five days after Alfred Lee's story broke, The London Evening Standard cited American intelligence reports confirming that 19-year-old Wang Wei Lin was dead. The article was attributed to The Standard's Beijing correspondent, John Passmore

[on camera] Do you recall that article?

JOHN PASSMORE, Correspondent, Evening Standard: Not at all. And now you tell me that it was American intelligence sources, I know it couldn't have been me writing it because I didn't have any American intelligence sources. I had British diplomats who helped me, but not Americans.

ANTONY THOMAS: But So you don't have any evidence that he was executed.

JOHN PASSMORE: No. I never knew who he was or what happened to him.

ANTONY THOMAS: And is that usual? Because it's your name there. Is it usual that◆◆

JOHN PASSMORE: Oh, sure.

ANTONY THOMAS: ◆◆reports are attributed to a journalist that actually wasn't written by him?

JOHN PASSMORE: Oh, absolutely. It looks so much better if you've got a man out in Beijing and he's written this report. But the report may have come from anywhere. Sometimes it's done out there, sometimes it's done in the office. But I don't remember it, I'm afraid. I remember cobbling a lot of stuff, but not this one.

ANTONY THOMAS: Do you think, in a way, that's a comment both on China and on journalism? When access is forbidden, we fill the gaps.

JOHN PASSMORE: Oh, yes. Yes. You must have something to fill the gap. The Chinese have a saying. They call it "news from the footpath." And it was the rumor mill, and of course, Beijing was absolutely full of rumors. For generations, I suppose, Chinese people have had their news from the next-door neighbor because the government certainly wasn't going to give them any. And yes, this sort of thing would have gone around the city like wildfire.

ANTONY THOMAS: The honest answer, as far as the Tank Man is concerned, is that we don't really know who he was and what he was. And I think, because of China, we'll probably never know.

JOHN PASSMORE: Probably not.

ROBIN MUNRO: I followed the paper trail of the reports that appeared in the Western press naming him as Wang Wei Lin, the reports that he'd been executed. I looked into these, and I just concluded at the end of that investigation that we actually had no idea what this man was called, what his real name was. And we'd even less idea of what had happened to him. He'd simply disappeared.

ANTONY THOMAS: *[voice-over]* There's only been only one crack in the wall silence. In 1990, Jiang Zemin, the man who would soon be president of China, was asked pointblank by Barbara Walters.



BARBARA WALTERS, ABC News: What happened to the young man?

JIANG ZEMIN: I think this young man maybe not killed by the tank.

BARBARA WALTERS: No, but did you arrest him? We heard he was arrested and executed.

JIANG ZEMIN: *[through interpreter]* Well, I can't confirm whether this young man you mentioned was arrested or not.

BARBARA WALTERS: You do not know what happened to him?

JIANG ZEMIN: But I think never   never killed.

BARBARA WALTERS: You think he was never killed.

JIANG ZEMIN: I think never killed.

BARBARA WALTERS: Never killed.

ANTONY THOMAS: This was the last official statement ever made on the subject.

Prof. XIAO QIANG, China Internet Project, UC Berkeley: Every year at the anniversary, I've got phone calls, I have interviews requests, I have journalists, I have teachers, I have students asking me, asking my organization, where is him, who is him, how is him now? But until now, today, I don't have an answer.

ANTONY THOMAS: For over a year, we also followed every lead, speaking to anyone who claimed to know the young man's name or his fate, until, like those who had followed the trail before us, we came to understand that it is the mystery that gives the Tank Man his enduring power.

ROBIN MUNRO: He didn't need to have a name. He spoke for the masses, the many who'd been silenced on June 4th. He was all of them. He didn't need a name. He still doesn't need a name because the point he made, everyone got it. Everyone heard it. It will endure long after this regime has become history.

ANTONY THOMAS: Our journey in search of Tank Man brought us face to face with that other great mystery, China itself. Can the leadership's great gamble of economic reform and political repression succeed, or will the spirit of Tank Man inevitably rise again?

Prof. XIAO QIANG: The power of that story is not getting weaker because of the time, because we don't know who he is, it's actually getting stronger. That ultimate spirit of freedom will last longer than the strength of tanks and machine guns. In the long frame of history, it's the human freedom, courage, dignity will stay and prevail. That picture will testify that forever.

The Tank Man

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ANNOUNCER: There's more of this report on FRONTLINE's Web site, including a roundtable with experts on China's efforts to curb the freedoms of the Internet, a timeline of Tiananmen and the regime's debate over how to deal with the protesters, a talk with producer Antony Thomas about his experience making this film, a chance to watch the full program again on line and more. Then join the discussion at pbs.org.

Next time on FRONTLINE: From behind the battle lines in Iraq, the inside story of the insurgency, their strategy

MICHAEL WARE, TIME Magazine: Al Qaeda is the main beneficiary of this war.

ANNOUNCER: their tactics

U.S. OFFICER: They would bring in fighters, organize them into cells.

ANNOUNCER: and their internal divisions. FRONTLINE takes you inside the Iraqi insurgency.

To order FRONTLINE's The Tank Man on videocassette or DVD, call PBS Home Video at 1-800-PLAY PBS. [\$29.99 plus s&h]

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