

Facts, Class Analysis and the Massacres of June 4, 1989

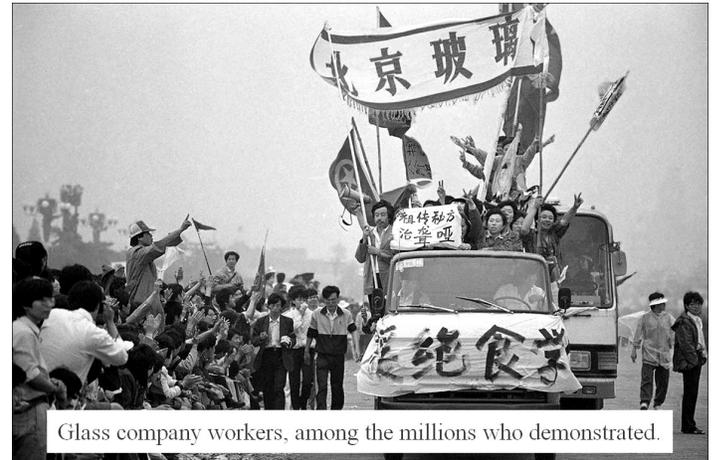
William Hinton, author of the classic account of Chinese land reform, Fanshen, wrote a book about the events up to and on June 4, 1989. He was there.

From the two weeks following the declaration of martial law, until June 3 or 4, certainly several million citizens of Beijing became active. But somehow that didn't come through in the media. The focus of world publicity was on Tiananmen Square. (p. 176 of *The Great Reversal*, Monthly Review Press, 1990)

Television showed personnel carriers on fire. It looked as though the people were on the offensive. Actually, these vehicles had shot their way through barricade after barricade and had killed probably close to 2,000 people. (p. 180)

The main killing occurred on Chang An Street both in the east and the west. On Sunday morning we went to see my sister and brother-in-law. We hired a little minibus to take us there. The driver had been up all night roaming the eastern end of Chang An Street. He said the army came in shooting and behind them were army ambulances picking up the bodies in order to conceal the casualties. (p. 181)

Whenever 200-250 people gathered there the soldiers fired point blank and mowed them down. I only witnessed the



Glass company workers, among the millions who demonstrated.

last time this happened, but my friends who had been there all day and kept notes said it happened at least six times. Just about every hour on the hour it was time to shoot down the people, and they counted fifty bodies carried out of there assumed dead, not to mention the wounded. (p. 182)

Many people were killed on the street and other people went through the hospital and died at home. The casualties were as high as 2,000, while thousands more were wounded. It was a major, major assault on the people. (p. 183)

The assault didn't have so much to do with the students. It was pretty clear that if the government had waited another week or so there would have been almost no students in the square. (p. 183)

The facts are clear: The government did *not* massacre students in Tiananmen Square; it *did* massacre thousands of workers on the streets of Beijing. Then you analyze the classes. At the end of the 1980's students of elite Beijing University wanted more participation in the new capitalism that Deng Xiaoping, Hu Yaobang, Zhao Ziyang and eager officials introduced piecemeal but monopolized for their cliques. The student protest touched off demonstrations by millions of workers. They were angry about rapid inflation, the loss of socialist welfare guarantees (the "iron rice bowl"), and the blatant theft of state assets by Communist Party officials.