

Edited Oct. 31, 1993

## **CHAPTER SEVENTEEN**

### **Tian An Men Testimony (1979-80)**

Tian An Men once meant Gate of Heavenly Peace. But to much of the world today it has come to mean Place of Massacre. I shall not describe in depth what happened there in the spring and summer of 1989. That is best left to historians. I will present what these events meant and mean to me, what I felt, thought and did about them; how they affected my attitude to the leaders of China and the regime they uphold. In doing so one must face the facts - and the lies.

The Chinese radio announced that a memorial had been unveiled to 14 members of the armed forces who died in quelling the "counter-revolutionary uprising of June". That I put in the category of lies, not only because of the false description of what happened but because no reference was made to the hundreds, perhaps thousands of civilians killed by the armed forces.

My attitude to Tian An Men, as it had been to the cultural revolution, was strongly influenced by our closest, most trusted, respected and loved Chinese friends, mostly former students who had become fellow teachers. One of them was an initiator of a couplet posted on our campus in mid-April, 1989, when Hu Yao-bang, the liberal and reformist former Secretary General of the CCP, died. It read: "We mourn the death of Hu Yao-bang. Why and how was he dismissed?" The university Security Bureau ordered that the couplet be taken down. It was - but it was posted again, signatures and all, in the centre of Tian An Men Square. Our friend was earmarked for posting to an important position abroad. She let her name stand, well aware that this would jeopardize her new job. (In the event she was sent, six months late, because she was irreplaceable.) Her principled stand, when so many were striving to go abroad, inspired me. I thought China has need of such people, free from careerism. That was one of the things that the democratic movement was about. Such acts and such people - their name was legion - helped me make up my mind.

I did so in the course of an awareness that had grown over recent years, that China, under the leadership of the CCP, had achieved great things: the doubling of life expectancy, land reform, improvement in the position

**HAMPSTEAD HEATH TO TIAN AN MEN**  
**(AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF DAVID CROOK. CHINA)**

of women, advances in science, technology and education, public health, modernization of the economy. But despite all these historic gains, the influence of feudalism was still strong. It flourished in the form of a hierarchy which, despite the slogan "seek truth from facts", all too often meant "truth is what the higher echelons say". The emperor was dead but he lived in the person of the high official or elder statesman. To my mind this is not socialism, which should embody the highest form of democracy. That thought had been planted in my mind when I first read Lenin's On the State and Revolution, after returning from Harlan, Kentucky in 1932. It was enhanced when I heard Mao's speech The People's Democratic Dictatorship in 1949, advocating democracy for the many, dictatorship over the few enemies of the people. Along with this went democratic centralism. But as the decades passed I noted that it was always centralism, not democracy that dominated. As Rosa Luxemburg had said: "dictatorship of the proletariat inevitably leads to dictatorship of the Party, dictatorship of the Party always leads to dictatorship of the Central Committee; and that in turn leads to dictatorship by one man." That was surely what occurred under Stalin. Lenin's exposure of the limitations and hypocrisy of bourgeois democracy was apt for the time and place he dealt with - Russia in 1917. But for post-revolutionary China decades later, still strongly influenced by feudalism, I had come to believe that some aspects of bourgeois democracy would be a step forward. After all capitalism is a more advanced stage of society than feudalism.

So when the abortive rehearsal for the Tian An Men movement took place at the end of 1986, I wrote to the Education Commission of the State Council:

January 4, 1987

I was happy to read vice-Minister He Dong-chang's statement at a press conference, as reported in the China Daily of December 31, 1986, in which he said of the recent student demonstrations: "There is no cause for alarm ....the possibility of major turmoil does not exist" ... "these students were patriotically showing their enthusiasm for reforms...and were concerned about democratic freedoms" etc.

The vice-Minister's sane and balanced appraisal contrasts with some alarmist reactions by other officials and reports in the media

Alarmist reports and comment simply condemn the students without paying due attention to the principal fact: thousands of students in several cities have gone out on the streets to demonstrate. They are inexperienced but they are neither totally ignorant nor reckless (after all their careers are at stake) and they would not demonstrate if they had no real grievances and if they were provided with an effective alternative means of expressing them. The demonstrations do disrupt traffic and affect production and other vital work. This is regrettable and harmful.

**HAMPSTEAD HEATH TO TIAN AN MEN**  
**(AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF DAVID CROOK. CHINA)**

But history - including the very recent history of Beijing - shows that bureaucrats and those enjoying unwarranted privileges will not mend their ways unless and until extreme steps are taken.

It is true that during such demonstrations a few reactionary and subversive elements will try to exploit the situation and launch far-out slogans. But this is not 'the major aspect of the principal contradiction'. The Chinese state and Chinese society are strong. They are certainly not so weak as to need to withhold from students rights guaranteed by the Chinese Constitution; nor are they incapable of investigating students' grievances and meeting their legitimate demands. To divert attention from these by blowing up the menace of a handful of infiltrators and a few preposterous slogans which have no popular support is to turn things upside down. It is to endanger the reforms initiated by the Chinese Government and the Communist Party.

Despite of progress in education the fact remains that in this country with its traditional respect for learning and the need for science in modernization, the amount of money spent by the government on education is, per person, among the lowest of all the countries in the world. This underlies much of the present trouble.

It is true that many students cherish illusions about bourgeois democracy and refuse to cast them aside even when confronted with facts. They do not wish to listen to accounts of the injustice, corruption, poverty, insecurity and inequality of American society, even when these things are reported on the Voice of America... Nevertheless, to stress only the shortcomings of American democracy and to disregard its historic achievements and to stress only China's achievements in democracy and disregard its shortcomings is undialectical, unscientific and unhistorical. China's socialist democracy is still in its infancy... there is still a very long way to go in granting the mass of the people access to information and in competing with much of the democratic reporting in the U.S. press. There is still a long way to go in granting the mass of the people appropriate powers of decision making in their own work... while China's infant socialist democracy has an immense potential, since it emerges from feudalism it has not yet institutionalized many of the democratic rights needed for socialist modernization... the American people through centuries of struggle have succeeded in establishing certain democratic procedures and institutions.

So, I think, China can still find it useful to adopt some of these democratic decision-making institutions, while adapting them to her own circumstances and needs. By conceding this, by granting the devil his due, she will be better able to dispel the students' illusions and utilize their enthusiasm for political reforms and socialist democracy.

In the spring of 1989, therefore it was natural and consistent for me to sympathise with the students and others who marched or cycled past our campus gates, even though I realised they did not represent the whole of the Chinese people. Still I was convinced that they were not just "a small bunch of trouble-makers" as the People's Daily editorial of April 26, inspired by Deng Xiao-ping, declared. Still less were they "counter-revolutionary rebels". I knew too many of them too intimately to swallow that. I was repelled by the slick, smiling dodginess of the official government spokesman as he appeared on TV.

Such was my thinking at the time of the 1989 mass movement for democracy and against corruption, nepotism and bureaucracy.

**HAMPSTEAD HEATH TO TIAN AN MEN**  
**(AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF DAVID CROOK. CHINA)**

Yet when the students started their hunger strike on May 13, I had my doubts as to whether this was the best form of struggle for their demands. But when with Isabel and Chinese and foreign friends I went to Tian An Men with bottled water and plastic sheets for our students I did not call on them explicitly to stop their strike. I simply said: "You must safeguard your health so as to carry on longterm struggle." A week later, on May 20th, the day that martial law was declared, Isabel and I sent a letter, hand-delivered, to the People's Daily, organ of the CCP. It read:

We write as old friends of China who have been inspired by the revolutionary achievements of the Chinese people under the leadership of the CCP ever since we started work in the Liberated Areas in 1947.

At this historic juncture we feel profound concern for the future of socialism in China. Above all we fervently hope that no attempt will be made by China's leaders to settle the present crisis by force. We believe that use of force would not bring about unity between the People's Government and the Chinese people but would widen the rift between them. We believe it would not establish stability but would create chaos. We believe that unity must rest on mutual respect, that stability can be based only on democracy, not on repression. We believe that to avoid the tragedy of pitting the People's Government and the People's Army against the people there must be immediate and unequivocal recognition of the sincere patriotism of the ongoing broad mass movement of the students and the mass of the people who support them. Our forty years of teaching tell us that the patriotic students of to-day are no more gullible children than were today's senior leaders when they founded the CCP and led the revolution six to seven decades ago.

We believe that recognition of these realities is essential for China's progress in political reform which is inseparable from economic reform, for the advance of socialism in China and for the restoration of her international prestige. Restraint, respect and democratic discussion not the threat and use of violence can bring about the resolution of the present crisis which we and all friends of China desire.

We felt it all the more important to clarify our position because we were shortly to leave China on our three-yearly holiday abroad. The letter did not appear in the People's Daily but was undoubtedly carried in some edition of the restricted circulation Reference News, and we posted it on the campus notice board.

We left for the airfield at 6:15 a.m. on the morning of June 3. The atmosphere was tense; unarmed soldiers had already tried to enter Tian An Men Square. We were accompanied not only by our son Michael but by a university vice-president whom we had once taught. In the car he relayed the gist of a speech delivered the day before by the university Party Secretary which, of course, upheld the official position as set forth in the People's Daily. We listened attentively but made clear that we did not go along with it.

**HAMPSTEAD HEATH TO TIAN AN MEN**  
**(AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF DAVID CROOK. CHINA)**

In Hong Kong the evening TV news showed that the unarmed soldiers had been pushed back from the Square. We were relieved but apprehensive. Isabel would have liked to return to Beijing. I thought this would be difficult and useless. What could we hope to accomplish? In any case, in old age I have become increasingly unwilling to change a course of action once started on. My heart was already in London. On June 4 news of bloody attacks on the students and their allies came through. Headlines screamed "Thousands killed". I could not believe such figures, but I did note in my diary "Those whom the gods would destroy they first make mad" - referring to the suppressors not the suppressed.

A previous half-dozen trips abroad had been half holiday, half speaking tours, doing propaganda for friendship with China. This time we decided that since we could in good conscience only condemn the Chinese authorities, not praise them, we would make no public speeches but would speak our minds once we were back in China. Meanwhile we would speak frankly to our friends in small gatherings at their homes or our own, which meant our son Paul's. I have some doubts as to whether that decision was right, though friends abroad and in China have assured us that we did the right thing. Still, my conscience gnaws. Was it opportunism inspired by our economic dependence on China, or was it sound tactics which would enable us to accomplish more for democracy once we were back there?

Meanwhile we continued our holiday in England, the Continent, Canada and USA. But Tian An Men was always in our minds, all the more so since the friends and relatives we saw were without exception concerned about China.

Our past trips abroad had nearly always been timed to end before National Day on October 1; or if that proved impossible we would attend the celebration at the Chinese embassy, in Canada or Britain, where many of our former students, even the ambassador himself, might be former students of ours. This time there were students in the embassies in all the countries we visited, but we did not contact them. Whether they upheld the Chinese government's official line or opposed it, contact with us would prove embarrassing. So we stayed away. And we stayed abroad until the end of October so as not to be present at the official celebration at the Great Hall of the People on the eve of October 1. On that day instead of feasting we fasted, in response to an appeal from Chinese students abroad. I had not fasted since the day of atonement 62 years before, when I was 17. It was not

**HAMPSTEAD HEATH TO TIAN AN MEN**  
**(AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF DAVID CROOK. CHINA)**

such an effort as it had been then, for now I was cursed with senior spread instead of the voracious appetite of youth.

Despite what for me was still an alien culture, returning to Beijing meant going home. And this homecoming proved sweeter than I could have hoped. The whole campus, except for a handful of teachers and functionaries (a nasty word but apt) was united against the massacre, the cover-up, the lying and the repression connected with it. The old factionalism of the cultural revolution had long since faded; some of our best loved friends had belonged to the rebel organization opposed to ours. The unity of "the masses" was unprecedented. The few hard-liners who strung along with the official account of "counter-revolutionary rebellion" in June were pariahs. If any of them at a social function, trying to mix, joined a group, the group dispersed and formed anew in another part of the room. Taking our queue from old and trusted friends, we cut old acquaintances who had become informers, among them "good neighbours" whose homes we once visited. Now we greeted them in passing but did not stop to talk. But in going around the campus we ourselves were cordially greeted by people whom we hardly knew. They knew us and knew where we stood. We were home. Home with a family which had grown larger.

A month before our return our son Michael had been phoned by the "Foreign Affairs" section of the university. "How is your health these days? Will you be busy next Saturday?" he was asked. Incautiously he answered that he was fine. "Then you are invited to represent your parents at a gathering at the Great Hall of the People where Premier Li Peng will present diplomas of merit to the "Veteran Foreign Experts". Mike had slipped but he knew where we stood and recovered his ground. "I don't think it would be right for me to go," he said. "You see I'm only the Second son." Michael knew his Confucian etiquette.

The presentation of the diploma was raised to us personally more than once after our return and we finally consented to receive it at a small luncheon on December 15, Isabel's birthday, making clear that we hoped the occasion would be an opportunity not merely to eat banquet food but to exchange views and information, desolate knowing that in Chinese traditional etiquette banquets are not regarded as a setting for serious conversation. Table talk should focus on the food, the name of each dish, how it is prepared, where the ingredients come from, in what way they benefit the health. Digressions to other matters may be taken as unappreciative of the hospitality of the

**HAMPSTEAD HEATH TO TIAN AN MEN**  
**(AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF DAVID CROOK. CHINA)**

host. This approach to table talk has been modified by modernization but it can be revived to avoid awkward topics. So we felt we must be on guard.

On arriving at the private room of the Foreign Experts' dining hall we were presented with our diplomas, in beautiful calligraphy and enclosed in an ornamental box bound in picturesque tapestry. The text, in Chinese here roughly translated, reads:

Comrade Crook (Isabel's was identical)

During the past several decades, together with the Chinese people, you have gone through wind and rain and sharing their trials and tribulations have done much work for the cause of liberation and socialist construction of the Chinese people and for promotion of mutual understanding and friendship between them and the people of other lands. To commend and thank you for your valuable contributions we hereby present you this certificate of merit.

(signed)

Li Peng,

Premier of the Chinese People's Republic,

September 1, 1989.

I confess to being happy with everything but the signature, so closely associated with the massacre of June 4. At the time I mumbled words of thanks and praised the beauty of the binding. Then we sat down at table, including three generations of our family, with the top leaders of the university.

The luncheon was elegant and the preliminary table talk amicable. But the subsequent briefing given, at my request, of events in China and in the university since we had left was less digestible than the dishes. We thought that the occasion was not suitable for argument, though we indicated by follow-up questions that we had some doubts - especially on the statement that only 200 people had been killed in the massacre. (The Party Secretary had already given us a figure of 300 and a Chinese friend holding a responsible position had assured us that there were "700 verified deaths"). Such discrepancies strengthened our scepticism of official statements which in earlier years we had taken as gospel. Step by step, I had come to realise the elementary truth that policy is more often a goal than a reality, that theory does not always match practice. We politely thanked our hosts and left with our diplomas under our arms and an undiminished credibility gap in our heads.

I had not made much ado of questioning the government's economic policies, realising that the road to socialism must be beset with retreats and compromises. I supported government efforts to develop the

**HAMPSTEAD HEATH TO TIAN AN MEN**  
**(AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF DAVID CROOK. CHINA)**

infrastructure, which would benefit the people. So I opposed sanctions except of a selective nature, such as those against trade in weapons, which might be used to suppress the people - for I was convinced that economic progress was essential for democracy. Three things, above all, stuck in my gullet: the killing of June 4, the cover-up and the continuing repression. Eye-witness friends assured us that the number of civilian killings had been understated and that of the military exaggerated. How could stone-throwing students inflict more casualties than soldiers armed with guns and tanks? Yet foreign visitors taken to hospitals were being shown only killed and wounded soldiers, never civilians.

We had trustworthy friends close to student activists. They told us that there had been a time in May when the confrontation could have been ended by peaceful means; that the students were willing to end their hunger strike, withdraw from Tian An Men Square and avoid violence. But Deng Xiao-ping, we were told before the institution of martial law, had issued instructions that blood might have to be shed. These turbulent students must be taught a lesson. Stability, meaning the status quo of undemocratic and corrupt rule, must be maintained, with power kept in the hands of the now privileged veterans and their sons and grandsons. These felt that not only their illgotten gains but their very lives were threatened. This we knew from some who had been our students. "They want to kill us," they said. The mayor and the Party Secretary of Beijing, feared that they would be held responsible and punished for disorder in the city. So they exaggerated its extent and distorted its nature in their reports to Deng, describing it as "counter-revolutionary rebellion", which must be sternly suppressed, otherwise the gains of the revolution would be wiped out. Deng decided that war must be waged to defend them. And in war there are bound to be casualties. Sentimental humanitarianism could not be tolerated. It amounted to treachery.

Such, I had evidence and reason to believe, was the thinking of those responsible for massacre.

Once perpetrated an attempt was made to cover it up, to wash away the bloodstains and putty over the bullet holes, to turn the truth upside down. After becoming a communist, especially after coming to China in 1947 I had learnt that criticism and self-criticism, acknowledgement and correction of one's mistakes and misdeeds was a basic principle of Marxism. Instead of this, those responsible for the massacre, refused to acknowledge any fault. They blamed those who had been murdered and secretly repressed and persecuted the survivors. For this,



**HAMPSTEAD HEATH TO TIAN AN MEN**  
**(AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF DAVID CROOK. CHINA)**

on Deng's instructions, they applied the principle: "be velvet abroad, iron at home" (wai song, nei jin). This meant appearance of lenience abroad and the reality of repression at home. This double talk is not my idea of scientific socialism.

It has been hard and painful for me to face these facts and to find myself for the first time in over four decades in a position which some would call dissidence. It is not. It is undiminished belief in socialism which forces me to take a stand, to make clear that I do not support the massacre and those responsible for it. Above all I do not wish to be used by them to show that "China's old friends" still stand by her. I am proud to be called an old friend of China, who has shared the Chinese people's weal and woe. But the emphasis must be on the people, not their rulers.

Although aware of my heresy Chinese officials with whom we have a working relationship, in a generous spirit of friendship still try to win me over, taking into account my whole record. Before the Spring Festival banquet for "Veteran Foreign Experts" in the Great Hall of the People to which Isabel and I would be invited by Jiang Ze-min, General Secretary of the CCP, they guessed that we would not accept the invitation. (We had in fact been racking our brains as to the best way to turn it down.) So we were invited to an intimate dinner party by a retired senior official whom we respected and liked, being assured that there would be no other foreigners present. We accepted, on the understanding that this would not be just a banquet but an opportunity to exchange views. I sweated over a statement and took along a full typescript. We were cordially greeted by our old friend and his entourage and waited for the opportune moment to present out ideas. There was no sign that such a moment would ever arrive, our host launching into his prepared statement, for which he needed no script. It was the same old stuff. There had been a counter-revolutionary rising to overthrow the People's Government and the Communist Party as part of an international onslaught against socialism. The People's Government and the People's Liberation Army had shown the utmost restraint, but when this was misinterpreted as weakness and when China's socialist system was actually being threatened there was, regrettably no way out but violent suppression, which resulted in tragic losses on the part of the heroic People's Liberation Army etc. etc.

All this took some time. The speaker had said at the outset that his own sons and daughters had rejected his interpretation of events and I had said that he would find us as intractable as his offspring; so he now

**HAMPSTEAD HEATH TO TIAN AN MEN**  
**(AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF DAVID CROOK. CHINA)**

graciously handed the floor to us. But I noticed that members of his entourage were looking anxiously at their watches, not because they found the official account tiresome but because the sacred hour for the banquet was upon us. This was acknowledged but we were assured that we might continue the conversation over dinner. I modestly confessed that I lacked the skill of combining dinner and serious conversation; perhaps we might talk later. Agreed. So at table we praised the food, compared notes on our health and discussed the weather. Then, as the meal approached its end, a member of the entourage observed that our host was getting on in years (he was in fact a year older than I) so perhaps we should put off our conversation to another time. But the old gentleman gallantly protested that he was in good shape - and promptly launched into a continuation of his preprandial speech. Isabel, being a more considerate person than I, was afraid of tiring our host, but I whispered to her: "If he can go on, so can I." I did. But I hadn't the heart at this late hour to do more than deliver the gist of my prepared script, which follows:

Last year we went abroad, leaving quite by chance on the morning of June 3. In the past when we went abroad we did propaganda for friendship with China, making speeches at meetings, over the radio, on TV. This time we did not, because, to be truthful, we would have had to be critical. So we decided: "What we have to say we will say in China, not in public abroad." ...

We believe that the Communist Party of China has a glorious history, that the Chinese revolution is great. But the killing of hundreds of civilians and the attempt to justify or cover it up have disgraced this glorious record and lowered the prestige of the Party and Government and their armed forces. They have undermined unity with the people, especially with the intellectuals without whom socialist modernization is impossible.

We do not consider that the movement for democracy and civil rights and against corruption was a counter-revolutionary rebellion... We believe that there was a stage at which the killing could have been avoided, when the students were eager to settle matters through negotiation. With a conciliatory response from the government the problem could have been solved peacefully, bringing a renewed upsurge of enthusiasm for socialism. Instead this opportunity was rejected and the method of massacre was chosen.

We have irrefutable evidence for not believing official accounts of what happened. We have heard eye-witness reports which make such belief impossible. Besides this we have been given conflicting official reports, that 200 people were killed; the (Chinese) media have stated 300; we have been assured by responsible people that so far 700 deaths have been verified. We ourselves have seen TV pictures of what happened while it happened. But official Chinese TV programs have been edited to falsify the sequence of events, to make cause appear as effect and effect as cause. This is made clear by the date and time which is registered on the film. Violence by civilians in angry response to prior brutality by soldiers is falsely put first in an attempt to excuse the soldiers' killing of civilians. There is a mass of such evidence to show that the official version of the events is dishonest.

Lenin said: "The person who has never made a mistake has yet to be born." We agree. We believe that those in power have made tragic mistakes, that they are continuing their mistakes

**HAMPSTEAD HEATH TO TIAN AN MEN**  
**(AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF DAVID CROOK. CHINA)**

and defending them.

...we will always be happy to meet old comrades and friends, as we have done this evening, to learn from them and exchange ideas. For what we have said is not an attack; it is an attempt to help correct a tragic and disastrous error. This is our duty as communists. We cannot shirk it.

We have worked in China for over forty years; we have been generously treated. We have learnt from the Chinese Party and the Chinese people whom we love. We wish to work with them and for them until we die. When we returned from abroad in October 1989 we had to fill out a form of the airport. The last question was: "How long do you wish to stay in China? I wrote: "Until I die."

I quoted those last few words in my post-prandial gist. They struck such a chord in our Chinese friends' hearts that they drowned out my earlier criticism and accusations. For to their way of thinking friendship for China is the highest virtue a foreigner can attain. So our controversial gathering dispersed in smiles, sincere on both sides, with agreement that the debate would continue.

It was resumed a few days later, when we were visited by one of our hosts, an old friend whom we liked and respected. His mission was evidently to persuade us to accept an invitation - yet to be officially extended - to the exclusive Spring Festival dinner for 'Veteran Foreign Experts', hosted by the Secretary General of the Party. As he had doubtless foreseen we declined; so we moved on to his contingency plan: to decide on the most inoffensive way of absenting ourselves. We could be diplomatically ill or aged or we could be out of town, on a brief Spring Festival holiday. This last was agreed on. But our holiday should not be too brief or too obvious. We should leave early, return late and go as far away as possible - at least outside of the province, so that it could be truthfully reported that we were in distant parts.

So we went to Penglai.

Penglai is a land of legend in the easternmost part of China, near the tip of the Shandong peninsula, at the respectable distance of twenty hours by train from Beijing. It is a picturesque ancient naval base, now a summer resort and we had a pleasant though chilly time there escorted by two filial sons and one twelve year old grandson. Local people were intrigued by these three generations of foreigners and as a conversational gambit often politely asked about my venerable age. Perhaps I answered too proudly that I'd be 80 this year. So Isabel tactfully advised me: "Just say you were born in the Year of the Dog", that being my animal in the traditional 12-year cycle of beasts by which birth dates are indicated. "Then people may think you're only 68". "Or 92,"

**HAMPSTEAD HEATH TO TIAN AN MEN**  
**(AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF DAVID CROOK. CHINA)**

quipped our grandson. I interpreted Isabel's advice as a criticism, recalling Mao Ze-dong's comment that one's age may become a burden. So when we scaled the hill on the top of which a thousand year old castle overlooked the ancient harbour, I struck off smartly on my own. Panting up the steep slope I slithered and stumbled along the rocky snow-covered path. By the time the rest of the family assembled round me at the top I was exhausted and lay down in the sun which had now fortunately emerged, popping pills of nitro-glycerine under my tongue as prescribed for my angina.

The others were worried but I was soon myself again, though secretly pondering old age, decline and death, this morbid subject having recently been much on my mind. Of late I had been conscious of slowing down, not keeping up with Isabel's still spritely step, lazily allowing others to do chores for me that I used to do for myself. Contemporary personal friends were dying off. Then I would think of people of my age or older, inspiring more active than I. I must be like them.

Shortly after returning to Beijing we attended a memorial service for an old friend, Maud Russell, whom we had visited six months before at her home in New York. Towards the end of 1989 she had died - at the age of 96. Maud had laboured until her dying day, issuing a monthly magazine, The Far Eastern Reporter, dealing mostly with China. She had worked in that country for quarter of a century as a YWCA secretary, moving closer and closer to Marxism. On "retirement" to the United States for decades she drove from coast to coast twice a year doing propaganda for friendship with China at a time when her country's government preached hostility. But for the last ten years she had been critical of the Chinese government which, she maintained was turning back from socialism to capitalism. That did not stop her work for friendship with the Chinese people. A month later we attended a similar meeting marking the twentieth anniversary of the death in China of Anna Louise Strong. In 1948 she was framed as a spy in the Soviet Union and on returning to her home in U.S. was condemned and cold-shouldered by the left. But she staunchly refused to co-operate with the right and denounce communism. Instead she came to China, for the sixth time, at the age of 72, and stayed here till her death. Then there was another old friend, Rose Smith, daughter of a long line of English potters. A founding member of the British Communist Party, she came to China in 1960 "to straighten out" those of us who were criticising the Soviet Union and siding with China in the split in the international communist movement. In the end it was we who

**HAMPSTEAD HEATH TO TIAN AN MEN**  
**(AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF DAVID CROOK. CHINA)**

"straightened her out" and she stayed to work for China until her death thirty years later at the age of 93. The list is not limited to women. There are men too, such as the Canadian one-time missionary James Endicott, who had known Isabel when she was a child and now, in his nineties still edits his Far Eastern Newsletter, focusing, at times critically, on China

I mused on such people as these on the chilly ride back to Beijing from Penglai, where we had stayed and shivered long enough to miss the select reception at the Great Hall of the People. (At Penglai we saw it on TV and noted with satisfaction our conspicuous absence.) I must emulate our aged friends. Not only in staying on the job to the end, sticking to principle in the face of condemnation from old friends and enemies but in keeping a clear mind, in continuing to study as they did, living up to the Roman adage, mens sana in corpore sano - a sound mind in a sound body.

Easier thought than done. Isabel arrived home to bouts of flu and I to an attack of bronchitis. We had paid in illness for absenting ourselves from the official Spring Festival functions in the capital. Still, I mused as I wheezed and coughed, on the whole my health was good for my age. My collapse on the hill at Penglai had been due to foolishness inspired by the Chinese saying: "The old steed still tries to gallop a thousand leagues". I would soon shake off the bronchitis with daily doses of the vile bile of snakes, a traditional remedy. And I would buy a monthly ticket at the newly opened indoor swimming pool at the Friendship Hotel - at a monthly cost of a month's basic pay for an unskilled Chinese worker. I saved my conscience by regarding it as an investment in health which would prolong my working life.

The next job of work I was called on to perform was to put forward suggestions for improving China's foreign propaganda. The gathering was discreetly limited, with just seven of us 'Veteran Foreign Experts' who had written articles and books about China. The presiding Chinese dignitary was a former head of the official New China (Xinhua) News Agency. He had an engaging personality and opened the proceedings politely by saying he had come to listen to us not to subject us to a long speech. Then, as good as his word he sat down. There was a long, awkward pause. At last, being the oldest person present, I broke the ice, stressing one point. The main weakness of China's foreign propaganda, I said, was not its technical failings. (These had been criticised by Westerners for decades, ever since Xinhua modeled itself on 'advanced Soviet experience' as exemplified by

**HAMPSTEAD HEATH TO TIAN AN MEN**  
**(AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF DAVID CROOK. CHINA)**

Pravda and Tass.) The trouble to-day, I declared, was lack of credibility, making clear that this had been undermined by misreporting the events of the Beijing Spring of 1989. Whatever the other expatriate experts thought they did not take up the cudgels of credibility (my euphemism for lying) but went on at some length about such matters as the translation of untranslatable terms, belated distribution, shortage of funds, ignorance of foreign readers' psychology, lack of concreteness and excess of verbiage etc. All these criticisms were valid but they were not, in my opinion, the heart of the matter. Finally our host made his "few concluding remarks", acknowledging in the course of them that there was a question of credibility. This was due, he maintained, to "shortcomings in our work", in other words to technical and professional failings. (There was no suggestion, of course, of misrepresentation!) In short he made a long defence of the June 4 massacre, relating it to the "worldwide conspiracy against communism resulting in the recent tragic events in Eastern Europe, especially in Romania." The "few remarks" lasted so long that I was compelled apologetically to excuse myself before he had finished, owing to a (perfectly genuine) prior engagement.

Now I am being warily approached on the subject of an officially sponsored 80th birthday party. Five years ago, in 1985, there was a joint celebration of Isabel's 70th and my 75th birthday. We protested that we would rather not have it in the Great Hall of the People, so it was held in a hotel near the university. Still, it was splendid enough, being presided over by vice Premier Wan Li, and with a eulogy delivered by Peng Pei-yun, Deputy Minister of Education. In my thank-you speech I said, after paying our respects to our hosts and all those present:

"...It is no great feat to live into one's eighth decade when one is treated as we have been treated for so long by the Chinese people and their leaders...

Something has been said of our contributions. We are grateful for those encouraging remarks. But we ourselves feel, in all sincerity, that what we have received far and away surpasses what little we may have given. Our lives in China have been happy, purposeful and long. This is a debt we can never repay..."

What about my upcoming 80th birthday party? I thought at first that it would be churlish to refuse outright, but put forward certain conditions: There should be no top government or party officials present; the affair should be on campus and should be simple not extravagant. In fact I jokingly suggested: as far as I'm

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concerned we should all have a bowl of noodles (the strands being a symbol of long life) and a noggin of er guo tou (double distilled liquid dynamite, the poor man's maotai) This was laughed off. The question in my mind, which was not taken up, was: what should I say? Re-reading the whole of my speech, which has been re-printed in a text-book, I thought: Fair enough. But that was four years before the Tian An Men Massacre. I still feel the same about our treatment, and our contributions, such as they are, and about other matters mentioned in my 75th birthday speech. I said then:

"Some people say they are disillusioned by the negative aspects of Chinese society to-day. But Chaiman Mao said (in 1949) our past work is only the first step on a long march of 10,000 li... Over the years I have come to realise that the re-making of a society of hundreds of millions of people, steeped in centuries of feudalism, cannot be accomplished quickly and easily, without setbacks and mistakes. But I am confident that by the end of this century - which with a bit of luck I may live to see... this China, which Isabel and I love, which has become our second homeland, will be creating a strong socialist society, and in the course of its modernization will strive to avoid the evils, suffering, ugliness and injustice which have beset modernization elsewhere."

I still believe that. So shall I say it again at my 80th birthday celebration a year after Tian An Men? No, the time for celebration is not yet. It will come when those responsible for the firing of the guns and the crushing by the tanks of students, workers, stall-keepers and common folk condemn their own deeds. Or when they are no longer in power. Meanwhile I have made clear, I want no officially sponsored birthday party. I feel like the prophet Amos who said nearly 3,000 years ago:

You who turn judgment to wormwood and leave off righteousness in the earth I hate, I despise your feast days and I will not smell the incense in your solemn assemblies...

But in my inner heart my love and gratitude for the Chinese people and my admiration for the historic achievements of the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese revolution - these remain unchanged.

When will be the time for "feasts and smelling incense"? When it is officially proclaimed that June 4 was a massacre - a killing of civilians by soldiers for the sake of those in power. That it could and should have been avoided. When it is no longer covered up but condemned. When judgment is no longer turned to wormwood and those unjustly punished are released and rehabilitated. When it is officially proclaimed that the

**HAMPSTEAD HEATH TO TIAN AN MEN  
(AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF DAVID CROOK. CHINA)**

movement of the spring of 1989 was not a "counter-revolutionary rebellion" but, in the main a demand for democratic rights and against the abuse of office for self-enrichment, against nepotism and corruption. No doubt the movement was to some extent infiltrated and exploited. What movement is not? No jade is without its flaw. But the jade, not the flaw remains the heart of the matter. When the reversal of history is reversed I shall rejoice - if I am alive. If I am not, no matter. This fifth of humanity which is China will be her own again.