

**Fabricated Secrets and Phantom Documents:
the “Tiananmen Papers” and “China’s
Leadership Files,”
A Re-Rejoinder¹**

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Internal documents illuminating the black box of Chinese political decision making are not come by easily, therefore the publication of two sets of such “top-secret documents” in recent years, accompanied by tremendous media fanfare, have generated considerable excitement among both academia and the public. The first set is the Tiananmen Papers (hereinafter TP) and their Chinese version, June Fourth, The True Story (hereinafter TS),² and the second set is China’s New Rulers (hereinafter CNR) and its Chinese counterpart Disidai.³ Both sets of “documents” are said to have been made available by former Chinese nationals now living in the US who had sought out Columbia University professor Andrew Nathan as a conduit to authenticate and to publish their materials. These people write under pseudonyms of Zhang Liang and Zong Hairen, and their identity, we are told, must be kept secret in order to protect their (or their families’) security. The materials promise to shed important light on behind-the-scenes functioning of the ultra-secretive Chinese political system at its apex, and the editors, Professor Nathan and his associates, strongly vouch for their authenticity. These promises have led to something of a media storm and TS/TP has since been translated into a number of languages. The editors even claim that their publication may have influenced Chinese internal politics.

¹ The first draft of this article was completed in May/June 2004. The author wishes to thank Don Hickerson for editing the manuscript.

² The Tiananmen Papers: The Chinese Leadership’s Decision to use Force against Their Own People - In Their Own Words (New York: Public Affairs, 2001). Compiled by Zhang Liang. Edited by Andrew Nathan and Perry Link, with an afterward by Orville Schell. The Chinese version is by Zhang Liang, Zhongguo liusi zhenxiang (June Fourth: The True Story)(New York: Mirror Books, 2001). The publication of these two books was covered by world-wide media, including front page in the New York Times, a segment in CBS’s 60 minutes, and extensive extracts in Foreign Affairs.

³ Zong Hairen, Disidai (The Fourth Generation)(New York: Mirror Books, 2002). Andrew J. Nathan and Bruce Gilley, China’s New Rulers: The Secret Files, first edition (2002) and Second Revised Edition (New York: New York Review Books, 2003). All page numbers in this article refer to the Second Revised Edition.

Yet, a careful examination of these supposedly authentic documents, and a close comparison of the Chinese and English versions, reveals fundamental flaws in the authentication process and many contradictions between versions. The claims of authenticity simply cannot be established and these materials clearly are not what they were cracked up to be. I would directly suggest that almost all the most important so-called “documents” in TS/TP are in actuality fabricated or reconstructed from lesser materials, and that there is little evidence of CNR/ Disidai containing any secret dossiers whatsoever.

My separate reviews of CNR/Disidai in the July 2003 issue of The China Journal and my review of TS/TP in the March 2004 issue of The China Quarterly (which was not available until June 2004) were followed by responses by the editors in the same issues.⁴ The controversy also attracted some media attention⁵ and discussion subsequently has continued on the Internet. Although this discussion has mostly taken the form of an intelligent debate carried out in a civil manner between Professor Nathan and myself, the same cannot be said about a vituperative and personalized attack on me by Zhang Liang, posted in six installments, on the Duowei news net in June, 2004, which was later reproduced by several other websites.⁶ A few examples of Zhang’s invectives on me that peppered his rebuttal are as follows:

- “Until now, this author does not have the guts to render his article in

⁴ Readers not familiar with the debates are advised to read these articles first, or skip pages 11 (last para. to 14 (1st para.)

⁵ Frank Ching, “The Other Tiananmen Controversy,” South China Morning Post (4 June 2004); Geoffrey York, “Poring Over the Tiananmen Paper Trail,” Globe and Mail (26 July, 2004).

⁶ www5.chinesenewsnet.com/gb/MainNews/Opinion/2004_6_1_19_26_15_443.html,
www5.chinesenewsnet.com/gb/MainNews/Opinion/2004_6_2_23_34_4_736.html,
www7.chinesenewsnet.com/gb/MainNews/Opinion/2004_6_8_22_44_44_287.html,
www2.chinesenewsnet.com/gb/MainNews/Forums/BackStage/2004_6_12_21_57_47_690.html,
www5.chinesenewsnet.com/gb/MainNews/Forums/BackStage/2004_6_13_20_6_12_568.html,
www2.chinesenewsnet.com/gb/MainNews/Forums/BackStage/2004_6_15_0_8_6_838.html.

Chinese, or to reveal his name in Chinese,” he is “really pathetic and cowardly.”

- “My understanding is that: As an academic nobody, Chan seeks to use his challenge to Nathan and the Tiananmen Papers and other books to reach his academic objectives. Indeed, I suspect that behind his ‘pure academic’ objective, whether he also harbours certain political background and political axe to grind.”
- “Yes, A. Chan is really too insignificant. My responding to his article, in certain sense, has elevated him.”
- “His hope is to stand firmly on the side of Jiang Zemin, Li Peng, and Luo Gan, etc., and to speak on their behalf.”
- “On the day when the archives of June Fourth are finally opened, and if Alfred L. Chan has finally moved by his conscience, he should knell down at the feet of Zhang Liang.”

Zhang also boasted that upon receiving my manuscript, the China Quarterly, out of respect for Professor Nathan and himself, consulted them on whether or not to publish the manuscript. Professor Nathan supposedly then sought the opinion of Zhang, who in turn made three suggestions; that China Quarterly publish my article, that Professor Nathan would write a rebuttal, and that I should translate my article into Chinese, so that Zhang could write a rebuttal. The China Quarterly, according to him, “fully” accepted all three of his proposals. This is not credible, as the blind referee process which China Quarterly follows, as all academics know, does not work this way.

Zhang’s insults [which can never trump the expletive Chinese officials applied to Chris Patten - “whore of a thousand years”] cannot be taken seriously, but regrettably, none of his collaborators have so far said whether they agree with him or not. To the contrary, after confessing that Professor Nathan and he did not actually possess the much-touted secret documents they claim form the basis of CNR/Disidai, Gilley weighed in on the Tiananmen Papers (TAMP) controversy by asserting that the evidence I have presented is merely smoke but no fire, and furthermore implicates me in the following:

[Andrew Nathan and Perry Link] ... are shunned by many China scholars for their forthright views on human rights abuses in China, and banned from China itself, not least for the publication of these books. The authors have braved the predictable and vociferous attacks of Beijing, several of whose points Chan repeats, to bring these books to the public.⁷

The fact is that I do not “shun” Professor Nathan, and am unaware of any other “China scholars” who do so for the reasons Gilley puts forth; Professor Nathan and I exchanged ideas a number of times in 2004. In any case, Zhang’s diatribe prompted Jin Zhong, a veteran China analyst, editor and publisher of Hong Kong’s Kaifang magazine, and one of the original participants in the Tiananmen Papers project, to write a tell-all article in the July 2004 issue of his magazine.⁸ Jin and I did not know one another before the publication of my critique of TS/TP, but his decision to break his pledge of silence to Professor Nathan was prompted by Zhang’s misrepresentations and by his revulsion at Zhang’s ad hominem attack on me. His most important testimonial was to reveal the editorial process of TS/TP right from its beginning and to bear witness to the long-rumoured fact that Zhang Liang and Zong Hairen are really one and the same person assuming two separate identities.⁹ Notwithstanding Zhang and Gilley’s attacks and the silence of their collaborators on whether or not they agree with them, the controversy has reopened debate on the Internet and revealed new information and perspectives about these two mysterious and controversial projects. This new light clarifies many issues around the alleged “crown jewels” of Chinese primary documents. In this re-rejoinder, I

⁷ Chinapol, 28 Jul 2004.

⁸ Jin Zhong, “Zhang Liang he ta de liusi gushi” (Zhang Liang and his June 4th story).

⁹ For instance, a 2003 Congressional report states as well that Zhang Liang writes under the pseudonym Zong Hairen. It says that Disidai is “probably as much a political tract as a factual account, nonetheless gives the reader a sense of the issues of concern in intra-Party politics,” and “While much of the information in the book may be accurate, it is likely to be distorted by ‘spin’.” See Congressional-

will consider the new evidence and the latest arguments contained in the several exchanges made by Professor Nathan and his teams. I am convinced more than ever that my original skepticism toward the authenticity of TS/TP and CNR/Disidai is sound, and has even been strengthened by recent developments.

The Tiananmen Papers

General Critiques

In questioning the authenticity of TS/TP I am not alone. Professor Nathan is correct to say that many participants in the events have vouched for their authenticity, but there are equally as many participants who condemn them as a forgery. Many exiled activists and knowledgeable Chinese observers have long complained that Deng Xiaoping, Yang Shangkun and Li Peng's more benign role as portrayed in TS/TP is distorted,¹⁰ that there are many significant gaps and omissions, and many errors in significant fact, such as the estimates of deaths. Yet, these voices have been unjustifiably inaudible in academic circles. For instance, the former student leader Feng Congde, who is now chief editor of The Human Rights in China website www.64.memo.com and who painstakingly collected and scrutinized documents relating to the Tiananmen events, has

Executive Commission on China, Annual Report 2003, One Hundred Eighth congress, First Session, October 2, 2003, pp. 9 and 89 (n. 9).

¹⁰ The Tiananmen Papers prepared by the CIA paint a more malign picture of Yang as a hard-liner and a rival of Zhao, see "The Road to the Tiananmen Crackdown: An Analytical Chronology of Chinese Leadership Decision Making." www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB47/. Since five important documents used in TS/TP are alleged supplied by 'a friend of Yang Shangkun', the problem of bias is that this friend may be interested in clearing the name of Yang. For a historian's critique of the Tiananmen Papers in Beijing Spring, see Xu Liangying, "The 'True Story of June Fourth' has concealed the truth" in www.bjzc.org/bjs/bc/121/30. Although TS/TP shows the vengeful and manipulative side of Li Peng, Professor Nathan also claims that he was cool and principled, and that the documents demonstrate that he

argued that TS is indeed a forgery. By carefully comparing the passages on Dai Qing and the intellectuals' mediation in TS with available memoirs and on-the-spot recordings, Feng found that TS repeats existing memoirs, duplicating their phrasing, omissions, revisions, and even factual errors.¹¹ Similarly, Feng has alleged that the passages on events of May 27 are plagiarized from the work "Diaries on the Student Movement" by a writer called "Qinghua Student."¹²

Revelations of an Early Participant of the Tiananmen Papers Project

The most significant new information on TS/TP, however, is that supplied by early TAMP participant, Jin Zhong, a veteran China analyst, publisher, and editor of the magazine Kaifang. According to Jin, he met Professor Nathan in June, 1998, in Hong Kong and was invited to spend a week at Nathan's home in New York in October 1998 to look over the unfinished book manuscript of TS (which chronicles the events up to May 1989), to advise on marketing and promotional issues, and to see if he could help publish it in time for the tenth anniversary of the Tiananmen events and massacre in June, 1999. Jin was among the few who had met and worked closely with Zhang Liang, a self-styled "central bureau-level cadre." Ultimately a contract with Nathan was not agreed, but Jin's disclosure of his experiences with the project further corroborates the arguments of myself and other doubters of the authenticity of TP/TS.

was not "responsible for the shedding of blood." (TP, p. xxiii). This is an interesting hypothesis, but it requires verification.

¹¹ Feng Congde, "Doubts about the 'Tiananmen Papers': An examination of 'The Twelve Intellectuals Visit the Square'," www.64memo.com/asp/html/feng415/feng415.asp. Such analyses require detailed and painstaking efforts at textual comparisons and therefore cannot be summarized. See also, Feng Congde, "The field of errors regarding June Fourth," in

<http://us.f107.mail.yahoo.com/ym/ShowLetter?YY=23107&order=down&sort=date&pos=0>

¹² Feng Congde, "New evidence on plagiarism in 'June 4th: The True Story'," www.64memo.com/asp/asp/catalogStatus.asp?Id=8428.

First, what Jin saw was not the sensitive and electrifying secret documents later touted by the editors. As he said, it is not easy to obtain internal CCP documents, and who wouldn't jump at the sight of 2,000 of them. Yet, at the time he found Zhang's book manuscript unexciting, the material un-explosive, and the documents quite ordinary.¹³ This view can be corroborated by comments from Zhang, Nathan, Link, and He Pin themselves at various press conferences describing negative and pessimistic reactions to marketability that greeted the book manuscript at the beginning, when it was rejected by Taiwanese and Hong Kong publishers.¹⁴

Second, as many documents contained in TS are either openly available in toto or as part of the roughly 200 books and document collections on the Tiananmen events, the TAMP stands or falls on its most unique, sensational and critical pieces, such as the alleged minutes of the meetings of the Elders, of the Politburo, of the Politburo's Standing Committee, and the secret conversations of top leaders allegedly in Zhang's possession. Yet, Jin said he saw nothing of that nature at the time, and before he washed his hands of the project he offered some advice – that the material on the top-level decision making process needed to be beefed up to make the project more marketable and that TP (or the English version) should be published before TS (the Chinese version) in order to lend legitimacy to the project. Jin's testimonial supports the contention shared by the critics of the TAMP (myself included) that the most critical and sensational official transcripts and informal speeches that permeate TP/TS were not really recorded on-the-spot, but are patched together (possibly after Zhang's meeting with Jin Zhong) by

¹³ The chronological narratives of the final version of TS up to May 19 contain alleged minutes of the meetings of the Elders and Politburo meetings, but it can be deduced that they were reconstructed and added after Jin Zhong's meetings with Zhang and Nathan.

Zhang using ex-post-facto recollections, briefings and memoranda of conversations. Professor Nathan admits as much in a very revealing paragraph when he said that *most* records of conversations *throughout* the book were “*reconstructed*” long after the events:

Finally, the compiler uses a series of memoranda of conversations supplied by a friend of Yang Shangkun. All of these sources are identified where they are used in this book. Since a given conversation is often described in several sources, the compiler has *combined information to reconstruct most of the accounts of conversations throughout* the book. Here, as in minutes, we use quotation marks, reflecting the fact that *even though these are not direct transcripts*, they were presented by immediate participants as authentic records and are often mutually corroborated (TP, p. xli; emphasis mine).

The last phrase “presented by immediate participants as authentic records and are often mutually corroborated” is misleading. How could any Chinese leader bear witness to what Zhang has *reconstructed* long after the fact? How did Zhang “combine” information to reconstruct documents? Why would any reconstruction be necessary when there was allegedly such a treasure trove of documents? Were the reconstructions meant to cover gaps where no originals existed? Were they a way to beef up the appeal of the collection as per the advice of Jin Zhong? Common sense dictates that reconstructed authentic documents is an oxymoron, a fact that the editors seem unable to grasp. Moreover, which documents are reconstructed and which are not is not identified in either TS or TP; this is presumably covered by Professor Nathan’s blanket assertion of authenticity. Furthermore, as I have demonstrated, Zhang was not beneath plagiarizing open material to “combine information” in order to create. A great leap of faith is required to argue that such reproductions are authentic. Since “most of the accounts of conversations” that were reconstructed ex post facto include the alleged minutes of the

¹⁴ www.chinesenewsweek.com/47/Feature/3579.html

meetings of the Elders and the Politburo, this alone is sufficient to discredit the entire project.

Moreover, while Nathan admits in TP that most of the records of conversations are reconstructed, in TS (pp. 49-50) the word “most” is not translated into Chinese, and the word “reconstruct” is translated as “chongxian” (reappear). The translator was clearly aware that the notion of “reconstructed” authentic documents would not fly with the Chinese readers, and therefore creatively mistranslated it. It is small wonder that commentators who could read only the Chinese version are almost unaware of this most important fact.

Third, according to Jin, Zhang told him that the original manuscript, which came to two million Chinese characters, was the work of several people, but Zhang then decided to publish only a portion comprising 300,000 characters. This seems to support Xiao He’s (if indeed such a person exists)¹⁵ accusation that the original project was shared by several people in China, and only when the TP were published in the US did he realize that Zhang had absconded with the fruits of their labour.

Fourth, there was also a monetary dimension in Zhang’s motives in publishing TS, apart from the two motives named by Professor Nathan – Zhang’s “loyalty to the truth of history” and his desire to put pressure on the Chinese leadership to promote democracy.¹⁶ According to Jin Zhong, one reason for the breakdown of the negotiation was Zhang’s demand for US\$154,000 (based on an estimate sale of 100,000 copies) as remuneration, without which Zhang said that he would rather abandon publication. Jin

¹⁵ Xiao He is the pseudonym used by a mainland Chinese who claimed that he and Zhang Liang belonged to a group which originally planned to write a history of the Tiananmen events using open sources. See Nathan, “Editor’s Reflections,” p. 732; Chan, “Tiananmen Papers Revisited,” pp. 197-8.

¹⁶ TP, pp. xix, xxi, xxii, and xxix.

had to decline because even the best selling Chinese political books published in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the Diasporas, according to his experience, did not sell more than a few thousand copies.

Fifth, Jin confirms the widespread rumour that Zhang Liang and Zong Hairen are really one and the same person. Jin said that immediately after publication of TS in April 2001, Zhang Liang sent him an article on Deng Xiaoping and the Tiananmen events through Nathan, and suggested that the article should be published in the name of Jin or the editorial department of Kaifang magazine, but not under the name of Zhang Liang. Jin thought that the article was a cut-and paste (qipin bacou) job and refused to publish it. Later, Nathan/Zhang sent Jin another one of Zhang's articles, with the specification that a new pseudonym, Zong Hairen, be used instead, and this was subsequently published in the May, 2001 issue of Kaifang.¹⁷ This is valuable information, for it links the two publication projects under consideration together and throws additional light on them. Professor Nathan did not deny or confirm what Jin had said, but chided him for breaking the pledge of not disclosing the fact that he had met Zhang Liang.¹⁸

More Speculative Issues

Jin's independent revelations support my contention, but there is still need to examine the empirically verifiable aspects of TS/TP, that is, to consider the documents themselves and the internal consistency of the entire project.

Before beginning that I need to respond to several questions posed by Professor Nathan although not all can be fully answered because of claims and counter-claims that

¹⁷ Jin Zhong, "Zhang Liang," Kaifang, July 2004, p. 65.

cannot be determined with certainty. Readers unfamiliar with the exchange may want to refer to the debate in the China Quarterly. Nathan asks: Why hasn't Xiao He disclosed Zhang Liang's real identity, or published additional documents and evidence, or responded to Zhang's refutation, or responded to Yan Zhen's¹⁹ defense of Zhang?

First, the fact is, Xiao He did reply to Zhang's initial refutation in *Xingdao ribao* on May 31, 2001, but because Zhang's refutation was a virulent *ad hominem* attack on Xiao rather than a reasoned examination of the evidence, nothing could be clarified.²⁰ As to Zhang's challenge to Xiao to expose his identity openly, Xiao explained that such an act would also expose *him* to the authorities and compromise his safety. Currently no one can ascertain whether Xiao is an official group or a private citizen in China, but if he is the latter involved in a forbidden project using unauthorized material he is much more vulnerable to official reprisals than Zhang who lives in the U.S.²¹ That may explain why Xiao appeared to have vanished without a trace. If Xiao was indeed a special group headed by Luo Gan,²² as charged by Zhang, one would expect he would continue to try to discredit Zhang with new materials and revelations. It is unfair to deny Xiao what Professor Nathan allowed for Zhang, that is, to keep his identity secret, especially when Xiao may face more imminent danger than Zhang. As social scientists, we need to guard our objectivity, and in this case, examine Xiao's evidence seriously and with an open mind and not merely dismiss it out of hand with simple *ad hominem* labeling.

On the other hand, Yan Zhen's defense of Zhang did consider the evidence, but

¹⁸ Andrew Nathan, "Huiying Jin Zhong de 'Liusi Gushi,'" (A response to Jin Zhong's 'June Fourth' story), Kaifang, August, 2004, pp. 94-95.

¹⁹ Allegedly a friend of Zhang Liang.

²⁰ Zhang's response to Xiao He is in www.duoweivweek.com/53/Feature/4078.html.

²¹ Xingdao ribao, 31 May, 2001.

his arguments are nothing more than assertions. For instance, Yan repeats Zhang's charge that Xiao He is actually a special team led by Luo Gan to investigate the Tiananmen Papers, and that the team was given such limited power that it was not given clearance to June 4 archives in any ministry, let alone those at the Central Party Office or the Secretariat. Yan's assertion raises immediate problems: if the officials were so concerned with neutralizing the damage of the Tiananmen Papers, why wouldn't they supply the special team under the trusted and powerful Luo Gan sufficient ammunition to do the job?²³ In the end, Zhang and Yan Zhen's defense contributes little to the authentication question, and regrettably these unverifiable claims and counter-claims are still used to support one position or the other. At this point, one can also address the question of why the Chinese party-state has not, apart from the initial campaign to discredit the Tiananmen Papers in 2001, pursued the matter further with more specifics.²⁴ Again, this kind of question cannot be answered with certainty. Perhaps after the lessons of dealing with the publications of Li Zhisui's memoirs on Mao, and with the Taiwan election and referendum, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has learned the drawback of "thou dost protest too much," and the value of "silence is golden." Since the bloody repression of 1989 is still extremely sensitive and divisive for the Chinese Communist Party, the mere reference to it as an issue may open up a Pandora's box and exacerbate conflict (for instance, pros and cons of the reevaluation of the suppression, the investigation of individual responsibility, and the legality of post-Tiananmen

²² Before the Sixteenth Party Congress of November 2002, Luo was a Politburo member in charge of state security, public security and political-legal affairs.

²³ Yan Zhen's articles are in Xingdao ribao (overseas edition), 14, 15, and 16 June, 2001. It is unclear if this Yan Zhen is the same person as the Hunan Normal University teacher with the same name who has contributed regularly to the Xingdao Ribao, Zheng Ming, and Xinwen Ziyou Bao. If this is the case, one can also question how he has access to the information supplied and why should we believe him.

²⁴ This includes a signature campaign, books and articles to discredit Li Zhisui.

leadership succession, and the like), the reluctance by the leadership to revisit the papers openly with more specifics is understandable.²⁵ The usual practice would be to conduct a campaign in secret to locate the “culprits” and to suppress the spread of TS/TP. However, if as Jin Zhong has testified, Zhang Liang really does not have any top-secret minutes of the conversations of the Elders and the Politburo in the first place, than the wrath of the Chinese government may have less to do with leakage of documents than with their fabrication and misrepresentation.

More empirical issues at authentication

Professor Nathan’s questionable reading of the Chinese material. Many of the problems with the authentication efforts have to do with Professor Nathan’s questionable reading of the Chinese material. Here I will cite a few examples. First, his repeated assertion that Xiao’s argument amounts to “the tacit acknowledgement that 95% of the material in TS is true” (p. 207) is simply inaccurate, when in fact Xiao He charges Zhang with wholesale plagiarism and forgery. A few summaries of Xiao’s letters published in *Xingdao ribao*²⁶ will illustrate our points:

May 28: Xiao charges that Zhang had (1) lifted passages from Xinhua’s internal material and plagiarized (*piaoqie*) extensively from books such as *Fifty-six Days* and *Fifty Days*²⁷

²⁵ This may be why, according to a press report, that a recent effort by Li Peng to weigh in with a book on the details of central decision-making during 1989 was blocked by the Party. South China Morning Post, March 20, 2004, accessed through the University of Toronto library.

²⁶ Translations of the articles are available from FBIS Daily Reports, now under World News Connection. The translations are basic, and for unknown reasons, some sentences are not translated. The author is willing to supply copies of the Chinese originals upon request.

²⁷ Jingxin dongpo di 56 tian: 1989 nian 4 yue 15 ri zhi 6 yue 9 ri meiri jishi (Fifty-Six Terrifying Days: A Daily Record of Events from April 4 to June 9, 1989), ed. by Guojia jiawei sixiang zhengzhi gongzuo si (Beijing: Dadi chubanshe, 1989); Wushitian di huigu yu fansi (Remembrance and Reflections on the Fifty Days), ed. by Guojia jiawei sixiang zhengzhi gongzuo si, Beijing shi weigao deng xue xiao gongzuo weiyuanhui.(Beijing: Gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 1989).

and transformed them into official documents by prefixing them with titles such as State Security reports, reports from provincial party committees, and so on, to the tune of about one million (baiyuwan zi)²⁸ Chinese characters, (2) falsified (*cuang ai*) the conversation between Zhao Ziyang and Xu into a talk between Zhao and Yang Shangkun, (3) turned the material in Deng Xiaoping's Selected Works III into a classified document of the CCP's Secretariat.

May 29: Xiao charges that the minutes of the Elders' meeting, the talk between Yang Shangkun and Zhao, between Deng, Yang, and Zhao, etc., were basically stitched together from media reports, internal hearsay and other writings.

May 30: Xiao cites an article in Beijing Spring which said that since many leaders' speeches, such as Zhao's May 4 talk and his conversation with Gorbachev, are in the public record, the most problematic ones are the alleged transcripts of Politburo meetings, conversations by the Elders, etc., and these comprise about 5% of TS. Then Xiao added the rider: "Can this be believed?" (*cihua xinran*). Xiao's aim in relating this is to demonstrate others were sceptical with this 5%, and in the general context of what he said, he never implied that '95% of the material in TS is true'.

May 31. Xiao charges that the sections in TS (654-657; TP 286) on the formation of the Association of Beijing Intellectuals on May 23 were condensed with materials from Bao Zunxin's *Inside Story of June Fourth* and turned into one of the two State Security Ministry reports. Further, Xiao charged that Zhang invented the following information:

When Luo Gan received these two reports, he had them sent over immediately to Li Peng's residence. Li later said the reports were among the firmest proofs of the fact that the student movement was manipulated from behind the scenes by a small handful of people intent on opposing the Party. Opposing socialism, establishing illegal organizations however possible, and deepening the crisis.

Xiao also charges that the section in TS 853-864 (TP 338-348) on "Western infiltration and subversion," amounting to 8,000 Chinese characters, was lifted from *Fifty Days* to become a State Security Ministry report of June 1, and that Zhang fabricated the following:

On June 1 the State Security Ministry submitted a report to Party Central on ideological and political infiltration from the West. It had been prepared on instructions from Li Peng, and like the "Emergency Report" of the Beijing Party Committee, it was sent to every member of the

²⁸ This is probably a typographical error, because TS consists of approximately 550,000 Chinese characters.

Politburo. It was viewed as providing one of the best justifications for the military action that was about to occur.

It is clear from the above that Xiao never conceded implicitly that 95% of the material in TS is true. Viewed from a different angle, the information contained in these two passages in quotations, used in TS and TP as bridging material, are clearly external to the alleged reports. They are not common knowledge, but there is no indication of what their sources are. Do they come from other documents in Zhang's possession, or do they derive from Zhang's personal knowledge and/or imagination? This is just another example of the mysterious packaging of TS/TP, deliberate or not.

Second, Professor Nathan states that he could not see the similarities in the identical and near-identical passages used in the alleged conversation between Yang Shangkun and Zhao Ziyang on 6 May in TS/TP and the version contained in Xu Jiatus's memoirs documenting his talk with Zhao Ziyang on 3 May. He provides English translations to one small paragraph leading to the body to illustrate his point, but this is inadequate. Indeed, mosaic plagiarism is difficult to prove, especially in translation. As I have already compared the two versions in detail I can only say that the similarities in wordings and phrasing are most striking if the *Chinese* versions are compared side by side, and I will supply the texts to anyone interested.²⁹

Third, on the publication of TP three months before TS, Professor Nathan tells us that originally Zhang wanted the opposite, but because of the difficulty of finding a publisher in Chinese, they settled on the prior publication of TP (TP, p. xxi). This is corroborated by Jin Zhong, as observed. In the rejoinder, however, Professor Nathan

adds that Zhang wished to delay the publication of TS so that it could be timed to commemorate the death of Hu Yaobang. Such a simple explanation is not entirely supported by Zhang's later statement in Chinese, which Professor Nathan must have consulted:

The publication of the English version before the Chinese is based entirely on the concern of strategy. If it is by pure chance that the publication of the English version coincided with the inauguration of a new U.S. president during the first week of the new millennium, then [we can say that] the unveiling of the Chinese edition on April 15 is to commemorate the people's much-loved General Secretary Hu Yaobang and the source of the most tragic events in twentieth century China – the June Fourth events of 1989. Indeed, there is a lapse of nearly three months between the publication of the English and Chinese editions, [but] the goal is to use such a time gap for the English edition to serve the function of continuous fermentation.³⁰

Then Zhang continues to say that while the impact of the English continues to be felt, the force of the appearance of the Chinese edition later would be that much greater. This self-styled motive is more complex and believable (particularly if we take into account Jin Zhong's revelations), and it is consistent with Xiao's charge that Zhang desired to use the editors' reputation to lend legitimacy to TS, as I have reported previously.

Fourth, in his rejoinder, Professor Nathan makes an egregious factual error over a major claim. In defending my suggestion that Zhang has copied large sections from 50 Days, Nathan said that "careful comparison" between TS and 50 Days shows that the former is more authentic than the latter because TS contains sections "in unadulterated form" on "never-before-published" information describing US and CIA efforts to co-opt

²⁹ Since much of the materials mentioned in this article are not readily available, the author is pleased to provide them by contacting achan@uwo.ca.

certain Chinese leaders, invitations from them to the US, and the activities of a China-based foundation supported by George Soros. This information is so hypersensitive that it is excised or absent from 50 Days, and only a selected few, including Professor Nathan who advised Soros on foundation activities, were privy to this information (pp. 210-211). Yet, even the most casual reading of 50 Days (published in 1989) would show that the three long paragraphs in question can indeed be found in full on pp. 75-76, with the only exceptions that the Chinese rendition of George Soros, *qiao zhi suo luo si* was replaced by the characters XX.XXX, that the name of Soros' assistant Liang Heng was omitted, and that the name of a CIA agent was represented by XXX.³¹ Such an oversight does not inspire confidence with Professor Nathan's reading of the Chinese materials.

Citation of Sources. The ambiguity about the sources is only one of the frustrating experiences in reading TS/TP. The many primary and secondary sources Xiao He and I have brought up are indispensable in any serious research on the Tiananmen events and in the authentication of TS/TP. Yet, not a word about them is mentioned in TS/TP. In the rejoinder Professor Nathan says that he was "aware" of most of these works but he cites only the English translations (of three documentary collections)³² in TP for the benefit of "English-language readers" (academics included?). It goes without saying (and I find it odd that I have to raise the subject) that the citation of sources consulted is *sine qua non* of academic work to establish credibility, to demonstrate the scope and depth of the research, to allow further exploration by the readers, and to acknowledge the debt to other authors. Professor Nathan professes to authenticate the documents as a scholar and

³⁰ www.duoweeweek.com/46/Feature/3486.html.

³¹ In TS (p. 857) and TP (p. 341) the XXX after the words "CIA agent" are excised.

³² TP, p. xvi, n.2; p. 5, n.6; p. 36, n. 20.

political scientist (TP, pp. xxi, xxix, xviii) but the failure to spend a few pages on a bibliography citing the Chinese sources not only obscures an already mysterious project, it is also a breach of academic conventions and courtesy, especially when the sources cast so much doubt on the claims of authenticity. Furthermore, it is odd for Professor Nathan to dismiss my legitimate expectation for the citation of sources as “illogical.”³³

Availability of Materials. The Tiananmen events were one of the most covered historical events – many in minute detail – of the last century, and there is a huge body of primary and secondary sources.³⁴ What is lacking, indeed, is information about the black box of official decision-making among the Chinese leadership. As mentioned, there are detailed daily and hourly chronicles of events in Beijing and the provinces, memoirs of participants, documentary collections, in addition to numerous media reports of the events and leaders’ pronouncements. No one expects a writer to forge hundred of pages of documents out of the thin air, but it is totally conceivable, indeed easy, for someone with a little imagination or background knowledge to make use of such voluminous materials to assemble/fabricate, with or without additional sources from China, a chronological documentary collection of the same size. Professor’s Nathan’s major claim that TP possesses “an internal coherence, richness, and human believability that would be almost impossible to fake” (TP p. xx) is a clear underestimation of the material out there and what a creative writer with native knowledge of the Chinese language could do. This lapse also contributes to the mystery surrounding the entire project, and the “just-trust-the-authorities” attitude of TP. We do not have all the documents, but we have sufficient

³³ Nathan, “Rejoinder,” *The China Quarterly*, March 2004, p. 209.

³⁴ The best and easiest place to obtain information about what is available on the Tiananmen events is 64memo.com run by Feng Congde.

evidence to throw serious doubts on the provenance of Zhang Liang’s “documents.” In his rebuttal, Professor Nathan asks, rhetorically, how come the “open and semi-open sources referred to by Xiao are still unavailable outside China”?³⁵ “Had any of these high-level materials been circulated among officials prior to the publication of TS, we can be sure that they would long since have leaked with great fanfare to the outside world.”³⁶ The *Foundry Proofs and Reference Proofs*, which Xiao cites as the chief sources of Zhang’s “documents” are unavailable outside of China. Professor Nathan himself relates the example of how The Army of Steel was quickly made unavailable soon after its publication.³⁷ Professor Nathan’s assumption that whatever is available in China should also be available to the West is unfounded.

Other Possible Sources. In my review I listed many major sources from which TS could have drawn from but this is far from exhaustive (see endnotes on Feng Congde). In the rejoinder Professor Nathan’s decides that it is unnecessary to go beyond six of the “documentary collections” plus the three English-language collection.³⁸ This is inadequate, because the sources of Zhang’s alleged “documents” can be traced not only to “documentary collections,” but also to memoirs, histories, chronologies, fictions, hearsay, and so on. Professor Nathan grants that “some of the material might have been discoverable by arduous research,” but his efforts were not expended in that direction, because he was too wedded to the assumption that the material “would appear to be virtually impossible to reconstruct by any conceivable research effort.”³⁹ Professors

³⁵ Nathan, “Rejoinder,” p. 207.

³⁶ Nathan, “Rejoinder,” p. 209.

³⁷ Nathan, “Rejoinder,” p. 212.

³⁸ Nathan, “Rejoinder,” p. 208.

³⁹ TP, p. xx.

Nathan and Link seems to have relied on extensive questioning of Zhang as the main method of authentication (see p. 48), but I would suggest that the lack of “arduous research” is perhaps the Achilles’ heel of the entire TAMP project. Let me cite one example: the description of Hu Yaobang’s collapse contained in TP (p. 20) is said to be based on:

participants' notes of an oral report given by Wen Jiabao, in his role as secretary of Party Committees of units under Party Central and director of the Party Central Office to the senior working staff of those offices, and of an oral report given by Luo Gan in his capacity as secretary general of the State Council and secretary of Party Committees in ministry-level state organizations, to senior staff of those offices.

Presumably these documents are examples of the “never-before-released” classified material, considering the importance of these organizations. Yet, TS (p. 106) mentions neither the participant’s notes nor “oral reports” but presents the material in a narrative manner. Furthermore, what is described in TS/TP can also be found in similar version in Pang Pang’s *The Death of Hu Yaobang*, an unabashedly fictional account⁴⁰ readily available in North American libraries:

The passages in TS/TP:

At 9 A.M. on April 8, in Qinzheng Hall at Zhongnanhai, Zhao Ziyang chaired a Politburo meeting to discuss views on a document called "Central Committee Decision on Certain Questions on Educational Development and Reform (Draft)." Hu Yaobang, although relieved of his position as Party general secretary in January 1987, remained as a member of the Politburo and attended this meeting. Commissioner of Education Li Tieying briefed the members.

During this briefing, Hu Yaobang sat with a pinched look. Minister of Defense Qin Jiwei later recalled, "I sensed something wrong about Comrade Yaobang from the time the meeting opened. His face was ashen. But he was straining to keep up appearances." About three quarters of an hour into the meeting, as Li Tieying was reviewing the education budgets of recent years, Hu appeared to be fading. He rose to request

⁴⁰ Pang Pang, *The Death of Hu Yaobang*, Translated by Si Ren (Honolulu: Center for Chinese Studies, 1989).

permission to leave. But as soon as he rose to his feet, he collapsed back into his chair. "Comrade Ziyang . . ." His voice broke off as his hand faltered in the air describing a semicircle. Everyone present, caught by surprise, stood up and stared at the ashen-faced Hu.

"It's probably a heart attack. . . . Don't move him!" someone said.

"Anyone have nitroglycerin?" Zhao Ziyang asked urgently.

"I do!" It was Qin Jiwei, who also had a heart condition. He took two pills from his briefcase and put them into Hu Yaobang's mouth. Then to Hu Qili, who came rushing over, he said, "Hurry and lay Comrade Yaobang on the floor."

Hu slowly opened his eyes as staff members telephoned Liberation Army Hospital 305, which was only a block from Zhongnanhai. Paramedics were on the scene in about ten minutes. That afternoon, after Hu's condition had improved slightly, he was transferred to Beijing Hospital for observation.

Compare this to the material in Pang Pang (pp. 9-10)⁴¹:

9:40 *a.m.* . .

Forty minutes into the meeting, Hu Yaobang feels stifled.

He later told his family that the subject of education was what made him feel bad early in the meeting. China's educational system is crippled by poor performance. The army of illiteracy is preparing for conquest. China is at a critical moment. Hu is worried as well as upset. He used to feel like this when he was worried and upset, but that feeling would subside after a while.

Later he finds that it is worse than he thought. Something heavy is crushing his heart. It rolls unstopably, like a T-34 tank. He feels dizzy. Then dizziness is replaced by numbness. He feels like a strange kind of bloodsucker is draining the blood from his brain.

He is pale.

Politburo members sitting nearby notice there's something wrong with Hu Yaobang. One of them later said, "From the meeting's start I saw that Hu looked ill. He looked worse and worse as the meeting went on. I should have reminded him earlier to go take a rest."

Hu can no longer hold out. He stands and waves to catch the eye of General Secretary Zhao Ziyang. One witness said later that it looked as if Hu was saluting Zhao.

"Comrade Ziyang," Hu says, "may I have your permission to leave..." Before he can finish, he slides into his chair with his eyes closed.

Sitting next to Hu is Defense Minister Qin Jiwei. He immediately holds Hu in his arms. At this moment, all eyes turn toward Hu Yaobang. Since his resignation, Politburo members have never given Hu Yaobang such attention.

Hu Qili makes the first assessment. "Hold it! It is probably a heart attack."

Zhao Ziyang asks loudly, "Who has nitroglycerine?"

"I have," answers Jiang Zemin, Shanghai's Party boss! He never brings his medicine with him, but it was God's design that his wife insisted that he bring it to Beijing this time.

"I've never had any heart trouble," he protested. "Bring it in case of emergency," she said. The emergency does occur, but it doesn't strike him. Jiang gets the medicine out of his pocket immediately, shaking it.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

Hu Qili grabs it, asking how it is administered.
Jiang Zemin is at a loss. This is the first time he has ever carried the medicine, and he does not know how to use it.
Song Ping comes over. "I know how to use it," he says.
Qin Jiwei and Hu Qili put the unconscious man on the floor. Song Ping puts two tablets into Hu Yaobang's mouth.
Hu regains consciousness gradually, vomiting.
Zhao Ziyang calls for a doctor .
There is no doctor to be found.
What negligence! What a pity! There is no medical staff present at such an important meeting. China's leaders are the world's oldest. Every leader is a dilapidated machine which could break down at any moment. A health problem afflicting any of them will make an army of medical experts helpless . . .

At 4 p.m. Hu is moved to Beijing Hospital.

Here we are presented with two similar versions of the same event, although one claims to be based on classified documents (in TP, not in TS) and the other claims nothing but fiction. As control, I have consulted a descriptive version of the event published by the Party history materials press on the assumption that if classified documents are available to writers then this is the press that has it,⁴² but it gives a disparate version from the above two. This raises several questions. Is this one of the "accounts of conversations" "reconstructed" by Zhang Liang? Did both Zhang Liang and Pang Pang have access to highly classified documents? Has Zhang Liang appropriated a fictional and dramatized account and turned it into classified documents, as charged by Xiao He? My own inclination is to answer questions one and three in the affirmative.

A great deal of fuss has been made by the publication of Bao Tong's confession as a "dramatic" corroborating evidence for TS/TP by Zhang Liang and Professor Nathan, although a careful reading of the material shows that it is not what it makes out to be. Professor Nathan never specifically explains why the confessions corroborate the

evidence with TS/TP in his “An Editor’s Reflection” or in his rejoinder (p. 210) as he relies on two articles by Zhang as proof.⁴³ A careful reading of these two articles, however, shows that Zhang merely makes a series of assertions about events included in Bao’s confessions without *directly* relating them to TS/TP, let alone corroborating anything contained in them. The best article which attempts to show how Bao’s Confessions corroborate with the certain facts in TS/TP is Zeng Guiren’s “Bao Tong’s Confession and its shocking resemblance with [the facts contained] in *June Fourth: The True Story*.”⁴⁴ Essentially Zeng demonstrates that Bao’s confession confirms (1) the existence of Politburo Standing Committee (PSC) meetings on April 24 and May 16, 1989; (2) the existence and contents of a PSC meeting at Deng Xiaoping’s home on May 17; (3) the motivation of Zhao Ziyang’s resignation; (4) the details behind the drafting of Zhao’s May 4th speech to the youths; (5) and the fact that Hu Qili was the drafter and Li Peng the approver of the April 26 editorial, as many of these are related in TS/TP. Bao’s confession sheds important light on the inner working of the Chinese policy process, but confirmation of such facts are only “shocking” or “dramatic” to those unfamiliar with the sources, as these pieces of information have been made available long ago, even in North American libraries: (1) to (4) can be located in Zhao and Li Peng’s speeches made at

⁴² Tian Guoliang and Sun Dafen, Hu Yaobang zhuan (A biography of Hu Yaobang) (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi ziliao chubanshe, 1989), pp. 214-215.

⁴³ Andrew J. Nathan, “The Tiananmen Papers: An Editor’s Reflections,” The China Quarterly, No. 167, (September 2001), p. 730 and n. 10. The two articles by Zhang are “More documents on June Fourth continue to leak out,” and ‘Bao Tong’s circumstances are more dangerous than before’, both are available in www.chinesenewsweek.com/49/Feature/3770.html and www.chinesenewsweek.com/49/Feature/3778.html. For Bao Tong’s confession and an introduction discussing its significance, see www.duoweivweek.com/48/Feature/3700.html , www.duoweivweek.com/48/Feature/3736.html, www.duoweivweek.com/48/Feature/3737.html, www.duoweivweek.com/48/Feature/3738.html

⁴⁴ www.duoweivweek.com/48/Feature/3714.html

the Fourth Plenum, and (5) can be found in Xu Jiatun's memoirs.⁴⁵

In his defense, Professor Nathan states,

Parallels of texts can by logic prove nothing, as Prof. Chan acknowledges, unless one of the texts is known to be a forgery . . . parallels of perceived or alleged parallels of texts can be found throughout the Tiananmen literature and cannot tell us much. These are all texts concerning the same events.⁴⁶

I agree that textual parallels *alone* do not prove everything, but my case is also supported by the examination of the editorial process, the revelations of a former participant of the project, the assumption of authenticity, and above all, the editors' admission of "reconstructing" the documents, among other things (see below). In any case, Professor Nathan's admission above that many sources concerning the same events in 1989 exist contradicts his claim that the TAMP are "almost impossible to fake" (TP, p. xx). It supports my point that it is plausible that Zhang Liang drew on the abundant open sources to fabricate more "internal documents" after negotiation broke down with Jin Zhong (see p. 19).

Opening up the original documents. Zhang's terms of cooperation with the editors – he would only agree to pass on the reformatted computer printouts of the documents to them (which he claims allow him to stay within the bounds of patriotism) but not to supply them with the "actual physical documents" in his possession (which he claims amount to betrayal) (TP, pp. xix-xx, 472) – is not credible. I have to confess that I do not understand what Professor Nathan meant on pp. xix-xx, where he said such "arcane distinctions are not foreign to our political culture," especially if we take into account

⁴⁵ Ding Wang. Liusi qianhou (Before and After June 4)(Taibei Shi: Yuanjing chuban shiye gongsi, 1995), volume 2, pp. pp. 101-103, 106-107, 127, 132-133. Xu Jiatun, Xu Jiatun Xianggang huiyilu (Xu Jiatun's Hong Kong Memoirs) (Hong Kong: Lianhebao youxian gongsi, 1994) volume 2, p. 365.

whistle-blowers such as Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers. In the rejoinder Professor Nathan staunchly defends Zhang Liang's distinction and even raises the stakes by saying that "authentication using physical documents would have endangered the Compiler."⁴⁷

No one would want to endanger Zhang in any way; I have challenged Zhang to open up the original documents for scholarly scrutiny, but not for him to disclose his identity or the manner by which he smuggled the material out of China. It has been four and a half years since TP/TS were published and made available around the world in many languages, and Zhang has continued to critique Chinese politics (and to taunt Jiang Zemin and Li Peng personally in two separate articles).⁴⁸ As far as I know, Chinese law on state secrets does not make a distinction between the revelation of original documents and computer printouts, and even if they did, for all intent and purposes Zhang has already risked the maximum by providing the editors with the computer printouts – to the CCP what he has done is high treason and/or espionage of the highest order. Increasingly, the citing of security as a reason not to open up the original documents looks more like a red herring.

As John Gittings has observed, the editors' acceptance of Zhong's terms and distinctions is a shade naïve.⁴⁹ Zhang's courage as a dissident is commendable, but this should not overshadow the great need for the authentication of important documents or to rule out the possibility that Zhang has never had all the original documents in the first

⁴⁶ [The Globe and Mail](#), July 26, 2004.

⁴⁷ Nathan, "Rejoinder," p. 210.

⁴⁸ Zhang Liang, "Warning to Jiang Zemin: This is the Last Chance for You to Leave a Good Name," and "An Advice to Li Peng: Don't Let Your Descendants Shoulder the Heavy Baggage," in www.chinesenewsweek.com/47/Feature/3604.html and www.chinesenewsweek.com/47/Feature/3622.html Last November Professor Nathan informed me that Zhang would like to debate me in a Chinese-language journal, and I agreed, but up to now I have not heard from him.

place. Since TS/TP have raised so much controversy, Zhang and the editors owe it to the readers to deposit the original documents to a reputable library such as the ones at Fairbank Center or at Columbia.

Professor Nathan's said that he did not insist on viewing the original documents partly because he "would not have been able to conduct the chemical and other physical assays necessary to distinguish high-quality forged documents from real documents."⁵⁰ This is unconvincing. Apart from such chemical and physical tests (which must be performed by experts) many important clues in the original documents may help establish their authenticity. Are the documents labelled extremely secret (*jue mi*), very secret (*ji mi*), or just secret (*mi mi*) according to CCP's graded conventions? Do they have serial numbers? What are the issuing units and dates of issue? Do they have scarlet letterheads?

The opening up of the original documents would also help solve two major riddles. First, the "bridging materials" or summaries in bold typeface in TP, which are supposed to be a blend of Zhang's "interpretative transitions," quotations from original documents, and elucidations for Western readers, is most fascinating and revealing because they provide information regarding decision-making inside the black box. These materials are not common knowledge, and for this reason, they are also the most problematic. Do they come from his personal knowledge, from the titled documents from his trove, or from other primary and secondary sources? Where do Zhang and the editors' contribution stop and where do the documents begin?

Second, hundreds of documents are simply unaccounted for. And I am not "wrong," as charged, to say that TS is "a heavily condensed, merged and summarized

⁴⁹ [The Guardian](#), February 10, 2001, accessed through the University of Toronto library.

⁵⁰ Nathan, "Rejoinder," p. 210.

history using these [documentary] sources.”⁵¹ Professor Nathan intimates that apart from the central documents, there are “32 documents from the military system including the Central Military Commission, the Martial Law Command, the Beijing Garrison and five military districts, and 209 out of 219 reports from provincial-level Party and government authorities” altogether totalling 657 documents. Therefore, even the longer TS at 1067 pages does not reproduce them in full. One task of Zhang’s as editor is to excerpt, merge, and summarize many documents and reports. We do not know the extent to which the documents are condensed, but we are informed in TS/TP that anywhere from two to a hundred reports submitted to Zhongnanhai are often *condensed* into one or a few pages in TS, and they are in turn further *condensed* in TP. Examples are so numerous that only a few are needed to illustrate this point.⁵² The publication of sources for the “bridging material” as well as the *full reports* (if indeed they are in Zhang’s possession) will not only push forward the authentication of the “Tiananmen Papers” they would provide an extremely important scholarly resources throwing light on the politics and processes on the entire movement.

The art of reconstructing “authentic” documents. We accept that TS/TP does in fact encompass authentic documents brought out of China by Zhang Liang, a number of which may be valuable and unavailable elsewhere. However, many others included in TS/TP, such as Renmin Ribao editorials, Xinhua News Agency dispatches, handbills, proclamations made by students, workers, and intellectuals, and State Educational

⁵¹ Chan, “Tiananmen Paper Revisited,” p. 213.

⁵² See, for example (the numbers in brackets are the number of reports claimed to be have been condensed on that particular page), TS, pp. 115 (100+), 211 (36), 395 (32), 465 (36), 563 (111), 696 (41), 779 (33),

Commission directives, are either available openly or contained in various document collections. Hence, the veracity of the TAMP project stands or falls, not on the alleged 798 documents in TS, but on the most sensational and critical of them, the so-called “never-before-published” materials, such as the alleged minutes of Deng’s meetings with the Politburo, and of meetings of the Elders, and various letters written by Zhao Ziyang, Yang Shangkun, and Lu Dingyi. Yet, Jin Zhong has said that he saw nothing of this importance at the time he worked with Zhang, although he did advise Zhang that the top-level decision making process should be highlighted to make it more marketable. Further, as mentioned, Professor Nathan admits that “the compiler has combined information to reconstruct most of the accounts of conversations throughout the book,” and the sources used were post-crackdown recollections at the Fourth Plenum, briefings “rehearsed” by Li Peng and Yang Shangkun, and documents supplied by a friend of Yang Shangkun.⁵³ This extremely valuable information cuts to the heart of the claims of authenticity.

According to the International Standard of Organization, an authentic record is one that can be proven (a) to be what it purports to be, (b) to have been created or sent by the person purported to have created or sent it, and (c) to have been created or sent at the time purported.⁵⁴ Clearly, ex post facto reconstructions of documents by Zhang Liang using materials made available after the fact, under different contexts, purposes, and circumstances, and by merging different versions made by the participants of the event do not satisfy the requirement of authenticity. Nor do they satisfy the requirement for

813 (54), 961 (over 100); TP, pp. 28 (18), 55 (12), 120 (62), 183 (38), 227 (46), 295 (41), 321 (35), 392 (46).

⁵³ Nathan, “Rejoinder,” p. 214.

⁵⁴ International Organization for Standardization, ISO 15489-1, Information and Documentation – Records Management: Part 1: General, First Edition, September 15, 2001, Geneva, Switzerland, p. 7.

integrity, which refers to the documents' being complete and unaltered.⁵⁵ When historian Chen Xiaoya does the same in reconstructing the records of Deng's May 17 meeting with the members of the Standing Committee, she acknowledges her divergent sources and tells her readers that she has reconciled the differences in emphasis by the disparate sources according to the logic of presentation. She did so to facilitate historical analysis and she never claims that the reconstruction is "authentic."⁵⁶ In TS/TP, however, the editors are indifferent to problems of timing, sequencing, completeness, bias, accuracy, or the integrity of the documents, nor do they tell the readers which so-called "top-secret" documents were reconstructed nor what criteria were used.

To illustrate the above, we will compare the source materials and the end products in TS/TP in order to reveal precisely the liberal way by which Zhang reconstructs the new or perhaps non-existing "documents." In TP (pp. 49-51) the editors tell us that Zhao's reminiscences contained in his confession/defense (jiaodai) made at the Fourth Plenum on *June 23* (reproduced as A in the following⁵⁷) is the *only* source used to *reconstruct* Zhao's conversations with several leaders made immediately after Hu Yaobang's funeral on *April 22* (reproduced as B in the following).

1A. Source (extracts of Zhao's Confession made on June 23)

After the conclusion of the memorial service, I raised three points: First, now that the memorial service is over, social life should be brought back to normal. We should firmly prevent the students from going into the streets and demonstrating, and we should get them to return to classes. Second, we should actively adopt a policy of persuasion toward the students and hold multilevel, multichannel, multiformat dialogues with them in order

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Chen Xiaoya, Tianan Men zhi bian: bajiu minyun shi (The Crisis at Tiananmen: A History of the June Fourth Democratic Movement) (Taibei Shi: Fengyun shi dai chuban gufen youxian gongsi, 1996), pp. 314-315, 358.

⁵⁷ My translation will follow closely that provided by the editors in order to facilitate comparison.

to improve communication and understanding. Third, we must at all costs avoid any incident of bloodshed, and we should use legal procedures to punish severely all who engage in beating, smashing, and robbing.

Li Peng and other comrades in the Politburo Standing Committee all agreed. Afterwards I heard that Comrade Li Peng had reported these three points to Comrade Xiaoping, who also expressed his approval. In the afternoon of April 23 I left Beijing for a visit to Chaoxian.⁵⁸ When Comrade Li Peng sent me off at the train station and asked me if I had more to say, I said those three points were basically it.⁵⁹

1B. The Reconstruction of Zhao's April 22 conversation with others in TS/TP using the above source (passages in bold typeface are in the original):

Zhao Ziyang: "First, now that the memorial service is over, we should firmly prevent the students from demonstrating and should get them to return to classes immediately. Second, we should use legal procedures to punish severely all who engage in beating, smashing, and robbing. Third, the main approach to the students should be one of persuasion, and to do this we can hold multilevel dialogues."

Deng Xiaoping: "Good."

Zhao Ziyang: "While I'm away, Comrade Li Peng will be responsible for managing the work of Party Central. If anything happens, he will report to you."

Other members of the Politburo urged Zhao to hold a meeting to discuss how to handle the demonstrations. Zhao said there was no time for a meeting, but he repeated his three points to Yang Shangkun, Li Peng, Yao Yilin, Li Ximing, and others.

Zhao Ziyang: "I just discussed three suggestions for handling the student movement with Comrade Xiaoping, and he agreed with them. Let me explain again to you comrades.

"First, now that the memorial service is over, social life should be brought back to normal. We should firmly prevent the students from going into the streets and demonstrating, and we should get them to return to classes as soon as possible.

"Second, we must at all costs avoid any incident of bloodshed, because if such an incident should occur it would give some people the pretext they are looking for. But we should use legal procedures to punish severely all who engage in beating, smashing, and robbing.

"Third, we should actively adopt a policy of persuasion toward the students and hold multilevel, multichannel, multiformat dialogues with them."

Yang Shangkun: "I support Ziyang's opinion."

Zhao Ziyang (to Li Peng): "While I am away, you will be in charge of the daily work of

⁵⁸ North Korea, author.

⁵⁹ Zhao's speech or confession is in Ding Wang, *Liusi qianhou*, volume 2, p. 126, and Yuan Huizhang, *Zhao Ziyang zuihou de jihui* (Zhao Ziyang's Last Chance)(Hong Kong: Mirror Books, 1997), p. 201.

Party Central.”

To cite another example, the editors say that the private conversation between Zhao and Li Peng on May 4 (TP, pp. 116-118) is “drawn” or reconstructed from *two* sources – Zhao and Li’s speeches made at the Fourth Plenum on June 23.⁶⁰ Upon closer examination, Li’s speech is not used directly⁶¹; in the following the relevant sections of Zhao’s speech is listed as A and the resultant reconstruction is listed as B.

2A. The Source: Extracts of Zhao’s Confessions made on June 23

Yet, I thought the student movement had two important characteristics. First, the students’ slogans call for things like supporting the Constitution, promoting democracy, and fighting corruption. These demands all echoed positions of the Party and the government. Second, a great many people from all parts of society were out there joining the demonstrations and backing the students. Beijing was flooded with protesters. At that time I thought the best way to bring the thing to a quick end under such circumstances was to focus on the mainstream views of the majority . . .

My problem with the April 26 editorial was that it set the mainstream aside and made a general, all-encompassing pronouncement that the majority just couldn’t accept; it generated an us-versus-them mentality. I had no quarrel with the view that a handful of people oppose the Four Basic Principles and were fishing in troubled waters. I said that in my speech today. But it was hard to explain, and also hard to believe, how hundreds of thousands of people all over the country could be manipulated by a tiny minority. The students felt stigmatized by the April 26 editorial, and that was the main thing that set them off. I thought we should revise the editorial, soften its tone a bit . . .

I was not opposed to the term ‘turmoil’ in the editorial. But I believed that this refers only to the scale of the protest and to the degree to which it had affected social order and that it did not foreclose the question of the political nature of the protest — I meant whether it was spontaneous or antagonistic . . .

Once the speech was published, the response was very positive. Comrade Li Peng also told me that was an excellent speech, and that he would echo me when he meet with the Asian Development Bank delegates. The tone of my talk is mild, for I did not sense any problem at that time . . .

⁶⁰ Li’s speech is in The Truth of Fire and Blood: A Documentary on the Pro Democracy Movement in Mainland China 1989, published by the Institute for the Study of Chinese Communist Problems, Taiwan, 1989), IV, pp. 248-252, and in Ding Wang. Liushi qianhou, volume 2, pp. 99-117 . English translation can be found in The China Quarterly, No. 128 (December 1991), pp. 888-901.

2B. The reconstruction of the private conversation between Zhao and Li Peng on May 4, in TS (296-298), TP (116-118), using the above sources (passages in bold typeface are in the original):

Later in the day Li Peng had a private conversation with Zhao about the speech:

Li Peng: “That was an excellent speech, Comrade Ziyang, and the response has been very positive. I’ll echo you when I meet with the Asian Development Bank delegates tomorrow.”

Zhao Ziyang: “I tried to set a mild tone. I hope it’ll do some good in quieting the student movement down and in strengthening foreign investors’ confidence in China’s stability. . . . Comrade Li Peng, when I got back from North Korea I heard about the strong reactions to the April 26 editorial in the *People’s Daily*. It seems to have turned into a real sore point that has the students all stirred up. Do you see any way to turn things around and calm them down?”

Li Peng: “Comrade Ziyang, as you know, the editorial reflected the spirit of the April 24 Politburo meeting, particularly the views of Comrade Xiaoping. There may be problems of tone here and there, but we can’t possibly change the core message.”

Zhao Ziyang: “Let me tell you how I see all this. I think the student movement has two important characteristics. First, the students’ slogans call for things like supporting the Constitution, promoting democracy, and fighting corruption. These demands all echo positions of the Party and the government. Second, a great many people from all parts of society are out there joining the demonstrations and backing the students. And it’s not just Beijing that’s flooded with protesters; it’s the same story in Shanghai, Tianjin, and other major cities. This has grown into a nationwide protest. I think the best way to bring the thing to a quick end is to focus on the mainstream views of the majority. My problem with the April 26 editorial is that it sets the mainstream aside and makes a general, all-encompassing pronouncement that the majority just can’t accept; it generates an us-versus-them mentality. I have no quarrel with the view that a handful of people oppose the Four Basic Principles and are fishing in troubled waters. I said that in my speech today. But it’s hard to explain, and also hard to believe, how hundreds of thousands of people all over the country could be manipulated by a tiny minority. The students feel stigmatized by the April 26 editorial, and that’s the main thing that’s set them off. I think we should revise the editorial, soften its tone a bit.”

Li Peng: “The origins of this protest are complex, Comrade Ziyang. The editorial did not accuse the vast majority of students of creating turmoil. When Yuan Mu had his dialogue with the students, and again when he spoke with journalists, he explained the government’s position several times over. The students should be quite clear about this by now. The trouble is, there’s no sign the protests are subsiding. In fact, quite the opposite: Now we have illegal student organizations that are openly pressuring the government. You’ve read the petition from that ‘AFS,’ so you know they’re trying to squeeze out the legal student organizations. And not just that: They want to negotiate with the Party and government as equals. They even add a lot of condition’, as if they’re above the

⁶¹ However, some similar ideas expressed in Li’s reconstructed dialogue may be loosely based on his other speech made on May 22, 1989. See Ding Wang. *Liusi qianhou*, volume 2, pp. 75-78.

government. That petition of theirs was itself a threat. The elder comrades like Xiaoping, Chen Yun, and Xiannian are all convinced that a tiny minority of people are manipulating this protest from behind the scenes. Their purpose is quite clear: They want to negate the leadership of the CCP and negate the entire socialist system. I agree with our Elder comrades. And that's why I hold to the view that the April 26 editorial is accurate and cannot be changed.”

Zhao Ziyang: “I’m not opposed to the term ‘turmoil’ in the editorial. But I believe that this refers only to the scale of the protest and to the degree to which it has affected social order and that it does not foreclose the question of the political nature of the protest — I mean whether it's spontaneous or antagonistic. I think we should publish another editorial distinguishing the majority of students and sympathizers from the tiny minority who are using the movement to fish in troubled waters, to create conflicts, and to attack the Party and socialism. That way we can avoid a sweeping characterization of the protests as an antagonistic conflict. We can concentrate on policies of persuasion and guidance and avoid the sharpening of conflict. This kind of approach is the best way to help calm the situation.”

Li Peng: “I disagree, Comrade Ziyang.”

And so the discussion ended. Neither man could persuade the other, and the two parted holding to divergent views on the April 26 editorial.

The above shows Zhang’s loose hand in transforming a documentary source into a script by taking liberties with the details with scant regard for accuracy. Additional sources may have been used, although they are neither accounted for nor acknowledged. It is possible that the recreated text has also been embellished by Zhang’s own imagination in order to fill a gap in his dramatized narrative. Such a style is consistent with the genre of popular history common in China and Greater China. Yet, why the editors found it necessary to turn text (from a monological testimony of one person showing one person’s version of events made *ex post facto*) into dialogue (involving several persons) to recreate an “historical document” is incomprehensible. And how can anyone seriously assert authenticity over such by-products? Furthermore, recreations make Professor Nathan’s claim of 798 documents in TS unreliable, because, to use our examples above again, Zhao’s confession/defense is presented as one document in TP,

pp. 441-447 and TS, pp. 1018-1024, but the contents of which has been extracted to reconstruct “documents” (conversations on April 22 and May 4) that are also presented separately as bona fide documents. At any rate, the comparison solves the mystery of why the alleged transcripts of meetings throughout TS/TP appear so artificial and stilted (participants seem to be reading positional papers to one another rather than engaging in conversations), a fact noticed by virtually all commentators. Although Professor Nathan knew fully that most of the so-called conference transcripts were reconstructed, he seems to have eventually persuaded himself that they were authentic, when he explains away the stiffness by saying that he was “told that somewhat stilted, unnatural language is characteristic of minutes in many governments . . . ”⁶² In any case, the fact that Professor Nathan insists on the absolute authenticity of a product deriving from sources that have undergone such processing and editorializing is puzzling. This reveals a profound confusion between primary and secondary sources.

Professor Schell’s Caution. Nathan’s forceful and blanket assertion of authenticity contradicts sharply with the views of one of the collaborators of the project, Professor Orville Schell, whose afterword in TP (not translated in TS) is filled with cautionary tales about past forgeries, such as the Jing Shan and the Hitler Diaries. He is on solid ground when he writes that that the editors “cannot guarantee” that the minutes of high level meetings are as accurate as the Pentagon Papers or the U.S. presidential transcripts recorded during the Watergate era. He *repeatedly* emphasizes that “no one outside of China can completely vouch for the authenticity of these transcripts . . . ” and “that we [the editors] still have no basis for proclaiming their authenticity with absolute authority.”

⁶² Nathan, “An Editor’s Reflections,” p. 726.

Since “The barrier between us and the documents is, alas, still real . . . Inevitably, then, blank spaces must remain both in the fabric of authentication and in the corroborating narrative we are able to weave for the reader,” he wrote (TP, pp. 470, 473-474). Schell’s warnings are indeed well taken, and had the editors stuck with these caveats they would have been on firmer grounds, but their assertion of authenticity (including Schell’s) seems to have grown with each media interview and promotion on TS/TP, resulting in a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy.

Disidai and China’s New Rulers: The Secret Files

The editors’ foggy view of authenticity, their unfamiliarity with Chinese sources, and their failure to do “arduous research” of existing documents as part of the authentication effort are well reflected in the second set of alleged top secret documents emanating from China. In 2002, when deliberations for picking a new slate of leaders began to heat up in anticipation of the Sixteenth Party Congress in November, Professor Nathan collaborated with Mr. Bruce Gilley⁶³ to publish another book allegedly based on “highly confidential” draft dossiers of the Organizational Department (OD) of the Chinese Communist Party used exclusively by “a small number of people involved in the process of selecting the new leadership group.” (CNR, p. 3) Like TS/TP, if this latest document set were authentic, it would be another coup of momentous significance. Yet, as I have argued, CNR’s *only* source, Disidai (which the editors refer to interchangeably as the OD dossiers), is actually a melding of internal information, document analysis,

⁶³ A seasoned former journalist with The Far Eastern Economic Review, now a doctoral student at Princeton.

hearsay, and personal imagination and experience, with barely any evidence of OD dossiers. This does not prevent the editors from repeatedly equating Zong's personal analysis with evaluations expressed in the alleged dossiers.⁶⁴ Upon my scrutiny and suggestion that the editors' authentication efforts should have been directed at the dossiers that allegedly form the basis of Disidai instead of Disidai itself, the editors finally confessed that they never had the dossiers in the first place,

We would have done this if the dossiers were available to us. Unfortunately, they were not. Neither Zong nor we have ever claimed that they were.⁶⁵

I rest my case. Yet, almost in the same breath the editors refer repeatedly to Disidai's direct quotes, inclusion, and summary of the dossiers.⁶⁶ In any case, the editors' assumptions and modus operandi in authenticating CNR/Disidai throw a great deal of light on the authentication of TS/TP. In addition, Jin Zhong's testimony that the instigators of both sets of bogus documents are one and the same person who assumes different pseudonyms and identities deserves attention. This raises more issues about these mysterious projects that still needs to be clarified. In the following, I do not think that I am whipping a dead horse by pointing out even more fallacies, and by showing how the documents should have been authenticated.

Provenance

⁶⁴ Chan, "China's Fourth Generation," *passim*.

⁶⁵ Nathan and Gilley, "Response," p. 121.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 123-124.

According to Professor Nathan and Gilley, the OD documents were channeled through a former Party official and aide of Zhu Rongji now living in the US and writing under the pseudonym of Zong Hairen.

In late 2001, as preparations for the succession intensified, persons in Beijing decided to reveal the contents of the reports to the outside world. Substantial portions of the dossiers on each candidate, still in draft form, were conveyed to a Chinese writer living outside China whom the officials in Beijing *trusted*. They asked that he use the dossiers as the basis for a book that would tell the world the inside story of the new rulers. (italics mine)

Similarly the editors also claim in the New York Review of Books⁶⁷,

Highly placed associates in Beijing provided Zong with draft versions of the Organizational Department's reports, intending to help him to publish a book based on them. Zong Hairen in turn has authorized us to present in English the information he received.

Elsewhere, the editors also assert, "Our underlying sources – to repeat – are long portions of drafts of Party investigation reports on candidates for the Politburo." (CNR, p. 36), and "In late 2001 and early 2002 Zong Hairen was provided with long sections of the then working drafts of these internal investigation reports." (CNR, p. 29)⁶⁸ In his deputation to Congress, Gilley also states, "My views are informed significantly by a compilation of internal dossiers of the Chinese Communist Party that were used in the succession and will be published in the U.S. later this year."⁶⁹

The motives of the Beijing officials in leaking the documents, the editors surmise, are "to provide more accurate information about China's new leaders to the outside world so as to prevent miscalculation." (pp. 32-33) This can be called the benign-information

⁶⁷ Andrew J. Nathan and Brice Gilley, "China's New Rulers: 1. The Path to Power," and "China's New Rulers: What They Want," in The New York Review of Books, September 26, and October 10, 2002.

⁶⁸ Another similar claim can be found in Andrew J. Nathan, "Authoritarian Resilience," Journal of Democracy, 14:1 (2003), p. 17, n. 4.

scenario. On the other hand, the editors also suggest that members of certain factions in the Politburo might have deliberately leaked the dossiers in order to discredit members in other factions (p. 33) by disclosing their weaknesses overseas, thereby involving the editors in the power struggle at the apex of power in China. This can be called the malignant-factional struggle scenario.

Both versions are equally fantastic. Any release of the most closely-held classified personal dossiers of China's top leaders would need to be authorized by the Politburo, and it is odd indeed that anyone trusted by the Chinese leaders would seek out Professor Nathan and Zong as a conduit to publish such documents. It is well known that Professor Nathan has been pronounced *persona non grata* in China for his involvement with Li Zhisui's biography of Mao and his promotion of human rights in China. Professor Nathan's contributions to the later command respect and for those of us who value academic freedom, the official Chinese ostracization of Professor Nathan is short-sighted, unfair, and reprehensible. Yet, the suggestion that the hyper-secretive Leninists in the CCP Politburo would entrust classified documents to an outsider (and a junior cadre at that), and eventually to Americans, detailing the leaders' personalities, faults, and their machinations in power struggles, warts and all, flies in the face of our knowledge of Chinese communism.⁷⁰ Furthermore, Zong regularly publishes reports on current events in China that criticize the regime and claim a fly-on-the-wall access to top level conversations and admittance to the minds of Chinese leaders.⁷¹ It strains credibility to

⁶⁹ Bruce Gilley, "The Implications of China's Leadership Succession for the United States," A submission to the U.S. -China Security Review Commission hearing, September 23, 2002.

⁷⁰ As Nathan and Gilley write, "Many passages are devoted to how particular leaders get along with other leaders and to the bickering, back-stabbing, and rumor-mongering inside Zhongnanhai." (CNR, p. 29)

⁷¹ See Zong's reports and analysis on China's leadership and the Article Twenty-Three controversy in Hong Kong, <http://anti-tung.org/v2/default.asp?part=13&newsid=4>, <http://anti-tung.org/v2/default.asp?part=13&newsid=3>, which drew a rebuttal from the Hong Kong government which

claim that he would be the “trusted” conduit of top-secret papers to American citizens. And the second scenario that the Chinese leaders attempted to involve Zong and the editors in their factional struggle is far-fetched.

The two motivation scenarios may be the story Zong fed the editors, but it is important to note that of all the above claims made in the English version (windfall leakage, involvement of Americans in China’s leadership factional struggle, etc.) none are either corroborated or even mentioned in the Chinese version. In fact, in the very first four pages of Disidai, Zong contradicts them altogether by saying that he himself put the book together by laborious collection of material and “research.” He mentions OD dossiers a few times and only in passing. According to Zong, research and preparation of the book was a torturous and complicated process with many twists and turns (*quzhe liqi*). And even when he finally overcame his reluctance to write, the “greatest difficulty” he encountered was the dearth of material.

To underline this point, Zong devotes three pages to decrying the absolute secrecy surrounding the closely-guarded lives and misdemeanours of the leaders. One can certainly sympathise with Zong, but this hardly sounds like the trusted beneficiary of a windfall of top secret documents about China’s top leadership. But at least he was honest about the provenance of his book. He probably had to, realizing only too well that it would not just fly to couch his book in terms of “top-secret personnel dossiers of China’s leaders” for the general Chinese reader, to which the book is directed.

The same cannot be said with CNR where the editors play up the OD dossiers and subtitle the book “The Secret Files,” thereby creating the impression that the book is

claims that the alleged meetings between Tung Chee-wah and Chinese leaders are “totally false.” www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/200308/27/0827203.htm. Indeed, the government’s version should also be

mostly documents plus comments which include a full chapter discourse on the nature and characteristics of the OD dossiers and frequent reference to the dossiers (or “investigative reports”).⁷² Zong has apparently convinced the editors.

However, the dramatic admission that no one, including Zong, ever actually had the dossiers nullifies all the extravagant claims made by the editors on the provenance of the documents, and confirms Zong’s more mundane version that he collected the material through studious “research.” How could any China specialist discuss authoritatively any dossiers in detail and vouch for their authenticity without even reading them?

The Issue of Authenticity

Even though the editors have admitted that they never had the OD dossiers, they still stick to the line that Zong’s “information was authentic,”⁷³ adding to a long list of assertions of authenticity. For instance,

- “...we consider the book to be authentic.” (CNR, p. 32).
- “...we satisfied ourselves that his information is accurate.” (CNR, p. 33)
- “We are satisfied that the book is both authentic and important,” and Zong is “authoritative and reliable.” (New York Review of Books)

Once again the editors assert a peculiar but consistent *assumption* of authenticity. For instance, in a lengthy discussion in the Introductory chapter of TP, Professor Nathan explains the presentation and treatment of the alleged secret documents in TS by using words such as “compile,” “merge,” “rearrange,” “change,” “combine,” “condense,”

taken with a grain of salt.

⁷² I think most readers of CNR would obtain the same impression. As Professor Schell’s capsule review of CNR on the dust jacket (omitted from the second edition) reads, “Whatever may follow, these documents provide a fascinating look behind that screen and help us understand how China’s leaders interact and govern this most consequential of countries.”

⁷³ Nathan and Gilley, “Response,” p. 122.

“reconstruct,” and “add (interpretive material),” and even Zhang Liang is objectified/denigrated as “the compiler” rather than mentioned by name. In CNR, as well, the editors note that Zong “supplemented” the dossiers’ content with “his own and his associates’ observations and analysis” and “mixes passages of original language from the investigation reports with passages of comment and analysis in the works of Zong and the associates who provided the files to him” in Disidai, and in transferring it to CNR, the editors had further “selected, rearranged, restated, and explained” this material (CNR, p. 30). Once the editors admitted that they really did not have any OD dossiers, their assumptions of authenticity also collapsed. One begins to wonder that perhaps when the editors refer to the “authenticity” of these documents, what they really mean is simple “believability.” If that were the case, it would explain why we have seemed to be talking past one another all this time.

The necessity and benefits of “strenuous research”

In both of my critiques of TP and CNR I suggest that a thorough documentary research of “a large body of both primary and secondary materials” would have fortified the editors against the misrepresentations of Zhang and Zong, but the editors insist that they “cannot serve to corroborate authenticity.”⁷⁴ I disagree that this task is beyond their purview, and offer the following examples. The proof of the pudding is in the eating.

Professor Nathan tells us that the OD dossiers also contain leaders’ formal and informal remarks “delivered confidentially...within party circles” on a whole range of

⁷⁴ Nathan and Gilley, “Response,” p. 122.

policy issues.⁷⁵ He also stated that Zong used additional sources, such as Zong's "own and his associates' personal conversations with the leaders involved." (CNR, p. 30). Hence, in chapters seven and eight of CNR the editors are able to use these "internal remarks" to discuss and compare the individual policy positions of the leaders on a whole range of issues ranging from democracy to foreign affairs.

This seems too good to be true, because one of the greatest frustrations of studying Chinese politics has always been that Chinese leaders seldom speak openly as individuals departing from the party line, and whatever individual message they may attempt to get through is usually buried under a mountain of rhetoric. Confidential internal speeches presumably would reveal more of the individual policy inclinations and positions of the Chinese leaders, yet my research shows that many of these kind of remarks in CNR/Disidai (all undated and untitled) are not that confidential after all, as large sections are readily available in open sources. For instance, Li Ruihuan's comments on Party style (Disidai, p. 112) are available from Renmin ribao (September 30, 2001), and his comments on party-mass relations (Disidai, p. 113-4), and leadership style (Disidai, p. 115) are both available in Renmin ribao (September 12, 2000). Wen Jiabao's comments on the work style on rural cadres (Disidai, pp. 155-6) are available in Renmin ribao (October 23, 2001), and his talks on south-north water transfer (Disidai, pp. 163-4; CNR, p. 209) is available in www.cws.net.cn/nsbd/newsbd/newsview.asp?s=253. In their discussion of political reform as contained in these remarks, the editors suggest the following remarks are new and personal to Hu Jintao,

The biggest danger to the Party since taking over had been losing touch with the masses. This is also the error we have been most prone to make. If we want something to happen below, we have to do it first at the top. If we want

⁷⁵ New York Review of Books, October 10, 2002.

to stop something, the leaders should stop it themselves.... To improve the Party's workstyle, we need in the end to focus on the core issue of the inextricable link between Party and the masses (CNR, p. 220).

Here, the fact of the matter is that Hu is just toeing the party line laid down by Jiang Zemin at a speech made at the Sixth Plenum of September, 2001, as all Hu's ideas and vocabulary are the same as those engaged in Jiang's speech.⁷⁶ Nothing is new or original on Hu's part here. Evidence of sloppy reading of such internal remarks also exists. For instance, in *Disidai* (p. 318), Zong boldly asserts that if Zeng Qinghong were given the opportunity, he would openly rehabilitate June Fourth, lift the ban on opposition parties and censorship of newspapers (*dangjin* and *baojin*), advocate the open election up to the county level, and expand the scope of privatization. In CNR (p. 228), these personal opinions of Zong are said to have come from Zeng's private talks, a most unlikely proposition.

The dual identity of Zhang Liang/Zong Hairen

One remaining issue is the double identity of Zhang Liang/Zong Hairen and its implications. Jin Zhong, whose participation of the Tiananmen Papers project predates that of Professors Link and Schell and who is a very credible witness, has testified that Zhang Liang and Zong Hairen are really one and the same person. Apart from merely having two pseudonyms, this shadowy person also assumes two separate identities in Professor Nathan's accounts. As the originator of the Tiananmen Papers, Zhang/Zong is portrayed as the persecuted victim of Chinese authorities for his "treasonous act," but as the originator of the OD dossiers, he is portrayed in part as the trusted conduit of the

⁷⁶ www.china.org.cn/chinese/PRmeeting/74616.htm.

Politburo to enlighten the West about the unknown new leaders. Currently the editors argue that this person's identity must be kept secret in order to protect his security even though he and his wife are now in the US. This raises the questions of how one person can be both the persecuted victim and a trusted agent and why a trusted agent of the Chinese leadership should fear for his security. Even if Zhang and Zong were two different persons, the claim that Zong would fear for his safety still does not make sense. Several observers, including Jin Zhong, have argued that the veil of secrecy surrounding the Chinese authorship is actually a marketing ploy and a cover up of Zhang's unprofessional conduct. It is difficult to imagine how his editors can square this circle.

Conclusion

Both *Tiananmen Papers/June Fourth, The True Story* and *Disidai/China's New Rulers* are said to be reproductions of top secret documents whose chain of custody cannot be established, supplied by someone whose true identity cannot be revealed going by the name(s) of Zhang Liang and/or Zong Hairen. A comparison between the two sets of documents points to several fundamental flaws in their editorial policies.

First, the original documents alleged to be in the possession of Zhang/Zong are sight unseen even by the editors.

Second, the Chinese and English editions of both sets of documents do not corroborate one another; the Chinese editions are clearly designed for the consumption of presumably less gullible Chinese reader, and the English edition, for the presumably more unsuspecting Western reader. Each language edition is assigned different standards for authenticity, translation, citation, style and presentation. For instance, the claim of

authenticity in TS is more modest than its counterpart in English translation, and *Disidai* does not corroborate the story of purposefully released Organization Department dossiers to which it makes only passing reference. TS reads as a chronological history replete with Zhang's personal interpretations, running commentary, analyses, and even his reading of the minds of the protagonists, whereas TP has been reformatted, repackaged and presented as a collection of documents with a neutral gloss. Zhang/Zong had probably never expected any reader to read both language versions carefully.⁷⁷

Third, both TS/TP and *Disidai/China's New Rulers* are secondary sources many steps removed from the alleged originals; and whatever authentic sources there may have been have undergone such extensive editing, reconstruction, condensation, and interpretation, as admitted by the editors, that it is pointless even to try to authenticate them. The editors' assertion that original materials were reconstructed by questionable methods long after they were authentically created clearly demonstrates their foggy concept of authenticity. I would suggest that by "authenticity" they actually mean mere "believability."

The above discussion points to an inevitable conclusion – both TS and TP are part fiction and part documentary collection that both take a great deal of liberty with their sources. The editors' assertions of authenticity and their presentation of the works as "top-secret" historical documents to English-speaking readers are, with all due respect, misguided and misleading. One cannot deny that TS/TP include some authentic documents, but by now it should be amply clear that the both books contain a mixture of two distinctly different categories of documents. The first category comprises documents

⁷⁷ When I first read TP it did not feel or read right. I began to note the contradictions and discrepancies in the two language versions when I finally read TS.

brought out of China by Zhang. Some of these may be valuable, especially to academics, but others are commonplace or are already available outside of China. The second category consists of “documents” recreated by Zhang using cut-and-paste and mix-and-match methods with scant regard for accuracy. Furthermore, in TS both categories are blended with Zhang’s running commentary, embellishment, and even his reading of the minds of the protagonists, although in TP they are reformatted to a more neutral gloss. It would be a futile exercise to fall back on the first category of documents to assert authenticity for TS and TP, for the authenticity both works have been hopelessly discredited by the second category of documents and by Zhang’s reckless editorialising.

The editors of CNR are more forthcoming. Although they couch the book in terms of OD dossiers, they have responded to my critique by quickly disavowing any claim to have had access to them. Since the much-touted secret OD files are not really available to the editors, perhaps CNR should be more appropriately renamed “The Zong Hairen Papers.” Similarly, although Zong has misled the editors into thinking that the format and content of Disidai resembles the OD dossiers, Disidai is really a research effort complemented by personal experience and understanding. Over the last decade or so, a whole parade of authors have claimed, like Zong, to have Zhongnanhai credentials and experiences,⁷⁸ and one must be cautious about misrepresentations and exaggerated claims. The value of Disidai lies in Zong’s personal knowledge and research, not in its alleged and dubious relation with some phantom “classified documents.”

⁷⁸ For example, see Xiao Zhengqin, Zhu Rongji kuashiji tiaojian (The Coming Challenges to Zhu Rongji)(Hong Kong: Taipingyang shiji chubanshe, 1998), Guo Ji, Xiao Yahong, and Xu Laping, Zhonggong disidai lingdaoceng (The Leadership of China’s Fourth Generation)(Hong Kong: Xinhua caiyin chubanshe, 2002; Chen Hao, Luo Hao, Wen Jiabao zhiguo xinbanzi (Wen Jiabao’s New Ruling Group)(Hong Kong: Xinhua caiyin chubanshe, 2003); and Long Hua, WenJiabao zhizheng nimu (The Inside Story of Wen Jiabao’s Rule)(Hong Kong: Xinhua caiyin chubanshe, 2004).

Have I been excessively negative and harsh in criticizing the works of leading experts of the China field, and have I been unduly suspicious? I do not think so.

First, because of the standing and reputation of the editors, and the prestige and trusted venues by which they are published, TS/TP, CNR and Disidai have all been regarded by the dozens of reviewers, academic or otherwise, as by-and-large authentic. Currently the English versions of these books are still widely available in major bookstores, sold and marketed as authentic top secret documents from China. Left unchallenged, these so-called secret documents and files would go down in history as authentic records even though they were primarily concocted and clearly “sexed up” by Zhang/Zong. The distortions this will perpetuate is likely to do tremendous damage for years to come. Specialist and general readers alike should be entitled to the truth.

Second, many of the errors committed by the editors, such as their foggy assumptions of authenticity, their unfamiliarity with and misreading of the Chinese sources, their profound confusion regarding primary and secondary sources, and their reliance on one source, are fundamental and elementary mistakes in academic research. This may be difficult to accept, but there it is. In his rebuttal, Professor Link plays up his control over Zhang, but fails to realize that it is the editors’ own fundamental weaknesses that have made them easy prey to Zhang/Zong. Professor Link writes,

. . . that from many hours of working with Zhang Liang on the TAMP in very detailed, concrete ways, it is just not credible to me--indeed nowhere near credible--that he made the stuff up. I asked him all kinds of specific questions about terms, dates, offices, documents, people, backgrounds of people, numbers of people, geography, and much, much more. Someone who was faking would have gotten nervous and self-conscious pretty quickly, but he went on hour after hour, day after day, with not the slightest sign that I could see of nervousness or self-consciousness. . . But to imagine that he could "fabricate" (the Chinese government's word) such an immensely complex web and keep it all straight in his head, without teetering off balance or

showing any unease, would be to attribute breath-taking genius to him, and I just don't think we need to do that. It's way too far-fetched.⁷⁹

Professor Link has simultaneously underestimated and overestimated Zhang/Zong – he has underestimated what a person with native knowledge of Chinese language, history and culture, and with some background in government, could do with a huge body of open-source material on the Tiananmen events, and it does not require anyone with “breath-taking genius” to concoct documents on this basis. I suggest that he read the afterword in TP to find out how Professor Schell qualifies the claims of authenticity (see p. 35), and how experts have regularly been taken in by bogus documents.

Third, until now Zhang Liang has not disclosed a single Tiananmen document or OD dossier to the public (and presumably not to the editors either), but the editors continue to vehemently defend his integrity. It is a pity that the urge to believe has marred the editors' judgements. Their weakness has not only played into Zhang/Zong's hands, but also emboldened him. It is clearly an irony that despite the editors' claim that they had closely controlled and rigorously scrutinized Zhang/Zong, they have been taken in by this political entrepreneur. By reading between the lines, I think Zhang was probably speaking for himself and implicated both his critics and his editors alike when he said,

Here, we can say with great pride (feichang xinshang) that, up to now, we have not encountered any challenger we respect or worth our match. The TAMP has not encountered any substantial challenge. How we long for a credible challenge from a worthy opponent!⁸⁰

⁷⁹ [Chinapol](#), 10 August, 2004.

⁸⁰ www5.chinesenewsnet.com/gb/MainNews/Opinion/2004_6_1_19_26_15_443.html.

