



The Legacy of Tiananmen: China in Disarray

By James A.R. Miles

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In *The Legacy of Tiananmen*, James A. R. Miles asks whether senior leader Deng Xiaoping's gamble that prosperity would bring stability to China has worked or whether, instead, the country's economic transformation is fueling instability. The author, who was the BBC's Beijing correspondent from 1988 to 1994, argues that China today remains at least as unpredictable and volatile as it was at the outset of the Tiananmen Square protests.

On the basis of extensive interviews with officials, ordinary citizens, and intellectuals, the author concludes that China in the late 1990s is a country deeply unsure of its future. Politicians and public alike are asking themselves whether China is emerging as a new economic superpower with global influence to match, or if it is heading toward the chaos they so much fear. In the coming years, the answer to this question will have major implications for the outside world. With a population four times that of the former Soviet Union, a China in turmoil would have a colossal impact on some of the world's most successful economies.

About the Book:

"By brilliantly gathering together newspaper stories, street interviews, leaked official documents and Western chronicles, Miles creates a compelling story of economic change, internal political uncertainty and, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, ideological isolation. . . . It's not a reassuring picture, but one that readers--and not just old China hands--should understand. This is an important book now and will be even more so any minute now." --*Publishers Weekly*

". . . a fascinating, sobering book that contrasts with much of the conventional wisdom on China. . . . [His] argument needs to be considered by all those who think about the future of the world's largest country and its potential impact on the rest of us." --Kenneth Lieberthal

"Miles's book is extremely lucid, coherent, and well-written. Its controversial main theme--that China is a country in deep trouble and may very well not survive a fractious succession struggle after Deng's death--is argued with persuasive force on many different societal levels." --Richard Baum, author of *Burying Mao*

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Miles spent eight years in Beijing, arriving in 1986 with UPI and staying on as the bureau chief of the BBC. It has been a tenure defined by the decline of the old guard and by the gamble Deng Xiaoping took when he ordered the shooting of student protestors, an act which resulted in some 5000 casualties and, later, hundreds of arrests. Seemingly forgotten by the West a few months after it happened, in China, Tiananmen did give pause to agitators both inside and outside the Communist Party. But, Miles argues, this was a hiatus. By brilliantly gathering together newspaper stories, street interviews, leaked official documents and Western chronicles, Miles creates a compelling story of economic change, internal political uncertainty and, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, ideological isolation. This is more than just narrative. Miles analyzes the results of Deng's 1992 endorsement of capitalist initiative (paired, always, with continued political control) and shows the fearful workers, de-stabilizing inflation, income disparity, corruption and rural crime behind the generally rosy official statistics. Miles also looks at the conflicting ideologies and personalities waiting in the wings. It's not a reassuring picture, but one that readers--and not just old China hands--should understand. This is an important book now and will be even more so any minute now. China is a very large, very powerful country, and Deng is a very old man.

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From Library Journal

Several years of rapid economic growth have convinced many observers that China has solved the problems that led to the Tiananmen massacre and stands on the cusp of prosperity and power. Miles, the BBC Beijing correspondent from 1988 to 1994, thinks otherwise. Beneath China's glittering surface, he explores a troubled country polarized along class, ethnic, and cultural lines whose corrupt elite has lost its sense of social and national purpose. With rich anecdotal evidence, Miles sketches the depth of rural unrest and the plight of China's fragmented dissenters. His intelligent, trenchant, and accessible report deserves a wide readership. Even if his pessimism is exaggerated, Miles's perspective is vital in contemplating China's future role in Asia and the world. For academic and larger public libraries. ?Steven I. Levine, Boulder Run Research, Hillsborough, N.C.

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From the Back Cover

'James Miles has written a fascinating, sobering book that contrasts with much of the recent conventional wisdom on China. He argues that bitter memories, rising jealousies, major dislocations, and a decline in the authority of the political system and the power of its top leadership may well produce future upheaval. Miles's argument needs to be considered by all those who think about the future of the world's largest country and its potential impact on the rest of us.' --Kenneth Lieberthal, author of 'Governing China'

Users Review

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