

Building upon the possibilities of surrealism as a revolutionary movement, Sine's creative use of historical events and movements of 1930s California results in a book worthy of deep reflection. Her imagination about the many possibilities of people's movements ably repositions some familiar historical moments. This book should be read by those interested in labor and social history, American studies and ethnic studies, and US history more broadly.

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doi:10.1017/S0020859022000153

BROWN, JEREMY. June Fourth. *The Tiananmen Protests and Beijing Massacre of 1989*. [New Approaches to Asian History, Vol. 22.] Cambridge University Press, Cambridge [etc.] 2021. xxvi, 266 pp. Ill. Maps. £59.99. (Paper: £22.99; E-book: \$24.00.)

Two of the abiding images of China in 1989 are the throngs of students occupying the symbolic center of Chinese politics, Tiananmen Square, and the hordes of Beijing citizens who came out to defend the city against the onslaught of the troops of the People's Liberation Army during the night of 3 and 4 June. Jeremy Brown's meticulous account of the developments before, during, and immediately after draw these two images together. While the protests started with the students they grew to draw in activist workers, many of Beijing's citizens of Beijing and even many beyond the capital. What resulted was a Chinese people's movement against the failings of the Chinese party-state. The massive scale of the protests revealed multiple frustrations, ranging from an uncertain economic future, through concerns about corruption to demands for greater freedoms.

Much early analysis of the movement focused on the students and their protests. This is not surprising given the images shown around the world, reinforced by the fact that a number of early and influential works were penned by student leaders. This was followed by analyses of elite politics to try to explain the decision-making that led up to the crackdown and removal of protesters from the Square. Writing many years later, Brown has been able to weave these early accounts together with a deep analysis of a wider range of materials, including the accounts of two key protagonists, General Secretary Zhao Ziyang and Premier Li Peng. Brown also shows us how many non-students were drawn into and impacted by the protests, including those in cities far away from Beijing. The events of Tiananmen had been preceded not only by the smaller demonstrations of 1986 but, more importantly in Tibet when soldiers had opened fire on protesters in Lhasa (March 1989). While this may have been dismissed as a "special case" of attacks on non-Han people, it revealed the party's willingness to use deadly force if deemed necessary. Brown also suggests that the "violence and vandalism" that occurred in Xi'an and Changsha on 22 April convinced Li Peng and Deng Xiaoping that "turmoil" was present and needed to be stopped before it could spread beyond control.

Brown clearly has his heroes and villains in the account and covers effectively "victim shaming", "old man politics", and how the events in Beijing were impacted by developments

outside of the capital and, in turn, how the events in Beijing affected actions elsewhere in the nation. Brown correctly criticizes those who proposed that the students brought disaster upon themselves through their intransigence and unwillingness to compromise with the authorities. Certainly, the students were convinced of the correctness of the claims that they were making. This assured them of the moral righteousness of their position, making compromise more unlikely. However, Brown asserts that none of these actions were sufficient to provoke the military assault of 3 and 4 June.

The prime cause of the violent outcome was what Brown identifies as the “old man politics” that persisted in Beijing. The older generation of leaders remained in key positions of power, undermining the official stress on the institutionalization of Chinese politics. There is no clearer indication of this than the dominance of Deng Xiaoping. Brown rejects the idea that Deng was manipulated into taking a harder stance by various underlings such as the Beijing Municipal leadership and Premier Li Peng. Rather, it was Deng who made the key decisions based on his own reading of the unfolding events. Using sources that have become available, the book outlines well the maneuvering that took place and how Zhao Ziyang was sidelined as Deng moved to impose martial law and ultimately to order the clearing of the Square by force. While subsequent accounts show sympathy towards Zhao, suggesting that if his views had won out, there might have been a different outcome. However, Zhao was seen by those protesting as part of the problem not part of the solution, signals and signs were misread or ignored.

As noted, the movement spread far beyond the capital and, in the initial stages, those from outside of Beijing exerted great influence. Brown notes that before mid-April, it was not clear that Beijing would become the center of the protest movement. Xi'an and Changsha had witnessed strong demonstrations and many activists came to Beijing to join the protests. Of the twenty-one on the public security bureau's most wanted list, only three were from Beijing, although only one was not studying in Beijing. However, large numbers of students did flock to Beijing to engage in the protests, sleeping in the Square in tents that sported the names of their home institution. This made shutting down the movement difficult as new students were arriving daily, while others departed. Visiting the students in the Square, they told me that they visited the sights of Beijing by day and returned to the Square to defend the movement at night. However, they had little if any influence on the student leadership controlling the Square.

The hunger strike spread outside of Beijing so that at least thirteen other cities had students following the example. The violence that Beijing endured was also felt in a number of cities, but, importantly, not all. Chengdu was an exception in terms of the level of violence. Other cities such as Shanghai, where then leader, Zhu Rongji, insisted that military force would not be used, were able to curtail the protests without the blood that was shed in the capital. Despite all of Brown's hard work, it is still difficult to know just how widespread the movement was and with certain exceptions, how far it reached beyond those places with significant student bodies. I remember in the early nineties visiting people in a town of some 3 million inhabitants in Central China and being taken aback to hear them use the phrase “turmoil” to refer to what had happened in Beijing. These people were viewed as extremely liberal members of the local community and yet they used official terminology to explain events. When I asked them how they knew it was “turmoil”, they replied because they had seen it on the television and had read about it in the party's newspaper, the *People's Daily*. Such an example reveals the strong grip that the official propaganda apparatus has for shaping the views of many away from the major cities.

Brown concludes each part of the book with a section on alternatives. This provides an interesting thought exercise. While examples outside of Beijing might have shown that a non-violent conclusion was possible, most alternatives run up against the crucial reality that “old man politics” that stood in the way of any acceptable outcome on behalf of the protesters. Suggestions that the National People’s Congress might convene to provide a solution were floated but bumped against the reality of power broking in Beijing. Even more specifically, it was Deng who led the responses and called for the shots to be fired and unless he was willing to step aside, other scenarios were barely viable.

Brown is to be commended for bringing fresh thinking to an event that has already received a significant amount of attention and that has spawned numerous accounts by key participants. It is a lively, vivid account of this crucial period that will be the major work for many years to come.

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doi:10.1017/S0020859022000165

SINGHA, RADHIKA. *The Coolie’s Great War. Indian Labour in a Global Conflict 1914–1921*. Hurst & Company, London 2020. xxi + 372 pp. Ill. £45.00.

For many people in Asia, Africa, and South America, the war that began in 1914 and with incredible devastation wiped out millions of people over the course of four years was a European–North American war that had nothing to do with the rest of the world. It was a war that, as Karl Polanyi put it, was the terminal point of the “one-hundred-year peace” in Europe. However, the war that broke out in Europe did not remain within Europe’s walls and soon engulfed the people of distant lands. East and West Asia, as well as North Africa, were among the regions inveigled by the carnage. The changes in the British Empire came about as a result of several factors, including the war itself, which was the first instance of total warfare, involving entire populations of the Empire, the metropole, as well as the colonial peripheries.

Over the past decade, academic institutions, chiefly in Europe and the United States, commemorated the centenary of the Great War by conducting extensive research projects studying the origins of the war, its four-year annals, and the implications it left for the years that followed. However, most of these studies are confined to the frontiers of Europe and North America, and there are very few studies that crossed these frontiers, following the footsteps of the Europeans or North Americans in Asia or Africa, and hardly any touched on the lives of the non-European indigenous. Radhika Singha’s book is one of the very few studies that not only looks into the Great War from a non-European perspective, but even looks into the lives and times of the most voiceless among the indigenous, the coolies.

The Coolie’s Great War consists of six chapters, with an introduction and an afterword. Chapter 1 begins with the author’s remarks on the ranking in the Indian Army and her locating the geographical distribution of the Coolie Corps as Indian “non-combatants” across