Li-I-Che is the vanguard of the Chinese Democratic Movement. The April 5th Incident at Tienanmun was evidence of the suppression of massive frustration and discontent. After the fall of the Gang of Four, the Chinese bureaucracy (in 1978) was forced to admit that such outspoken heroism is "not counter-revolutionary".

1978-79 was a year when popular sentiments and hopes for the new age were high. Many cadres and intellectuals oppressed by the Gang of Four were rehabilitated and reinstated. It was revealed that rampant arbitrariness in legal sanctions in past years had engendered hundreds of thousands of wrongs and grievous, unjust verdicts. The victims, their relatives and friends, demanded justice and recompense. In the second session of the Fifth National People's Congress, the Secretary of the People's Procuracy, Wang Huo Qing, admitted that grievances were widespread, and that at that early time, 60% to 70% of the 270,000 cases of verdict-reversal already in the pipeline were cases trumped up by unscrupulous cadres to oppress the masses.

For this reason, many of the provincial and regional cadres obstructed the work of verdict-reversal and rehabilitation, so that for a time people from all provinces (especially peasants) converged on Beijing the capital to petition the central administration. They shuttled from government department to government department, were often famished and huddled shivering in the chilly streets, in time to be arrested and imprisoned by capital police.

Thousands and tens of thousands of these peasants assembled at Chung Nan Hai in August 1979, hoping to meet with the country's rulers. Yet they were driven away and arrested by troops who visited them with truncheon blows.

A Beijing woman worker, Fu Yu Hua, organized these petitioning peasants but was arrested and sentenced to two years imprisonment for "obstruction of traffic". Her sentence was up in 1981, but she was still not released.

Both the masses at the Tienanmun Square and the petitioning peasants reflected the hopes and demands of the Chinese people -- but were these ever heeded?

The spirit of the April 5th Incident reminded the masses that they must take their future into their own hands. The Democracy Walls at Beijing and XXian had become places where people discussed how society was to be reconstructed. They claimed their rights (vested to them by the Constitution) of putting up big character posters, organizing seminars, and publishing stenciled magazines. At the same time, in many cities, including Shanghai, Guangzhou, Wuhan, XXian and Hang zhou, there appeared many Democracy Walls and groups concerned with the discussion of ideas similar to the April 5th Study Society. In order to restructure their society, to help articulate the demands of the masses, and to explore social theories, the young people had heralded a peaceful and constructive revolution: The Chinese Democracy Movement.

This Democracy Movement took the form of publications, participation in local elections, students' movements, workers' movements, theoretical discussions, and literary and cultural activities. It was desired that full scale reforms would take place in all areas, and that the feudalist patriarchal influence of the Mao Zedong era would be fully eliminated.

While the official attempt at economic reforms suffered an inevitable failure because of bureaucratic corruption, waste, blind investment and heavy indebtedness abroad (the Baoshan Steel Works is a case in point), the number of unemployed reached 20 million in the cities with a further 10 million unemployed as a result of the contradictory activities in the heavy industrial sector. The Party had lost the confidence of the people. Influenced by the activities of the Polish workers, in late 1980 there were great developments in the workers' and students' movements.

Gulag of Tibet

For the last 2,000 years the country of Tibet has kept to itself and remained largely a great secret to the outside world. A recent Tibetan secret is the brutal treatment its people and culture have received during the last 25 years at the hand of the Chinese communists.

The Tibetans considered themselves independent of China with the revolution of 1911. But communist armies invaded the land in increasing numbers in the 1950s, and in 1959 people rose in armed revolt. Tibet's temporal and spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, went into exile in India, followed by more than 100,000 Tibetans, as the communists set about conquering the mountain regions.

In the last quarter of a century since the rising, the Chinese have executed or killed in battle more than a million Tibetans (roughly one sixth of the entire population). The communists have destroyed Tibet's natural economy and agriculture (by unsuccessfully attempting to turn it into a wheat-growing region to feed China), killed off the wildlife, disrupted water systems, damaged through mismanagement the forest resources, and created huge slave labor camps. The Chinese have created a poverty unknown in Tibet for centuries and have sought to wipe out traditional Buddhist culture (3,000 large schools, religious centers, and monasteries have been leveled). As recently as 1984, the communists arrested approximately 15,000 Tibetans for attempting to start a democracy movement.

The Population Bomb

Westerners troubled by recent problems in China generated by the new one-family-one-child policy, should look at the facts of exactly what happened to China's population during the last 36 years.

In 1949, when the communists took control of the nation, there were 550 million mainland Chinese at most. When the one and only China census was taken in 1963, the count was 583 million. Chairman Mao, believing he needed a labor force far beyond what China could offer, urged on a national baby boom; and it became a political crime to mention family planning or birth control. High ranking officials were thrown out of the party and imprisoned for suggesting any population limits. At a world population conference in Yugoslavia in 1974, birth control was called a "wicked imperialist plot" by China's delegation. Only in 1976, with Mao's death, was the nation allowed to consider use of contraceptives or a way to deal effectively with the runaway population growth.

Today China has a population of 1.1 billion and a per capita income of roughly $150, making it only the 125th nation in the world as to wealth. Its basic food production (millet, wheat, and rice) did not show a per capita increase between 1955 and 1977, the last year for which figures are available. Mao's romantic imaginings about limitless Chinese has proved to be the greatest Maoist misadventure of them all.