

The Return of the tank

--In search of an open system in contemporary China

Today's China shows a surrealistic landscape: an authoritarian government engages with a neo-liberal market, the communism marries the capitalism. Those we once thought to be incompatible are now merged in a way of harmony and promise.

A quote, said to be from Napoleon, is well-known over the world, "let china sleep, once she wakes up, she will shake the world"¹. Its peculiarity bears a double articulation. First, it puts Europe and China in equal status²; secondly, it satisfies the vanity of the Chinese nationalism, which has dominated the education system in China. Of concerns with the problems of tyranny, human rights, and poverty in China, the discontent of the people increases proportionally as its economic development. 18 years ago, the massacre in Tiananmen square became a memory without history. Now, the history remains absent, and the memory is fading away.

This project aims to rethink the June 4th massacre and its meaning to everyone at present, especially to those living in China. We give a theme to this project, the "Return of the Tank" with a subtitle "in search of an open system in contemporary China". Return of the Tank, to us, again bears a double articulation. Firstly, it represents the return of the state machine, or we should say it is always there without being noticed, and it comes to our mind on every 4th of June; secondly, the tank to us, is the war machine which fights against the state machine. 18 years ago, Mr. Wong Wei Lin tried to use his body to stop the tank. In this sense, he is a tank constructed with flesh and love³. Today, we wish the return of the tanks with flesh and love, to open up more possibilities other than the dialectics of dichotomy.

We are not going to instigate a bifurcation of the state and her people. Instead, we are seeking the possibility of transformation, a transformation to an open system. We understand that such is a complicated issue, and we expect a discussion can be initiated among those who are interested in China. In this discussion, Lawman and I will present each of our writings, one on the openness on communication especially the internet, the other on education especially the history education. You are welcomed to download these two papers from the website.

Through this discussion, we hope that those who are interested in China can understand what is happening beyond its promising façade and the common critique from the western countries. For those who are familiar with politics, we wish you can express your ideas and concerns. Besides the discussion, there are also artworks created for this project. We wish it to be an archive.

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¹ China shakes the world, James Kynge, P.7 2007. phoenix

² For a more detailed explanation, please refer to Sun Long Ji's "The meridian of a historian"(Chinese)

³ As Hardt and Negri will argue for a new form of resistance, the violence of love