

Interview with Deborah Porter

Q: How did the Chinese citizens cope with the relatives lost after the government covered up the event?

A: PERHAPS THE MOST SALIENT COPING MECHANISM WAS THE REPRESSION OF SPEECH RELATED TO THE EVENTS. I WAS TOLD BY QUITE A FEW PEOPLE WHAT 'VIGOROUS FORGETTORS' (JIANWANG) THE CHINESE ARE.

Q: Did people (who weren't involved in the protests previously) start to question the authorities' power after the massacre?

A: MOST OF THE PEOPLE WITH WHOM I INTERACTED WERE VERY SAVVY ABOUT WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED, WHICH IS NOT NECESSARILY THE CASE IN THE RURAL AREAS. THAT SAID, THE PARTY'S OWN EMERGING COGNITION OF A LACK OF MORAL LEGITIMACY IS LIKELY A RESULT OF GROWING DISSENTION OVER POLICIES THAT PERPETUATE INEQUITIES BETWEEN RURAL AND URBAN POPULATIONS.

Q: Why was the Tiananmen Square Massacre covered up by the government?

A: AUTHORITARIAN GOVTS GENERALLY WANT TO CONTROL FRAMING AND EXPLAINING THEIR ACTS, SO THIS IS ONE FACTOR. BUT ANOTHER FACTOR IS ALSO CHINA'S DEEP DESIRE TO MAINTAIN IT'S STATUS AS A GLOBAL PLAYER, WHICH WOULD BE CHALLENGED BY MORAL APPROBATION AT THE GOVT'S TREATMENT OF ITS CITIZENS. RECOGNIZING THE GOVT'S INTENTION TO RECTIFY WITH ITS LEADERSHIP A CENTURY'S NATIONAL HUMILIATION SUFFERED AT THE HANDS OF THE WEST, ALSO DEEPENS APPRECIATION FOR CHINA'S DESIRE TO MANAGE THE DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION RELATED TO THE EVENTS.

Q: How powerful was the Chinese government power compared to today?

A: ALTHOUGH SOCIOHISTORICAL CONDITIONS ARE DIFFERENT, MY PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE IS THAT THE PARTY IS PERHAPS MORE POWERFUL TODAY, THANKS IN PART TO THE INTENSE EXPANSION AND MANAGEMENT OF INTERNET COMMUNICATION.

Q: Is there any way that Chinese students now could learn about this event?

A: NO, STUDY ABROAD (INCLUDING HK) IS THE MOST CONSISTENT MEANS FOR TRANSMITTING INFORMATION.