

No One Died in Tiananmen Square

By: William Lutz

[R]eality is not external. Reality exists in the human mind, and nowhere else. Not in the individual mind which can make mistakes, and in any case soon perishes; only in the mind of the Party, which is collective and immortal. Whatever the Party holds to be the truth is the truth. It is impossible to see reality except through the eyes of the Party.

--George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

Thousands of troops did not attack the students in Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989. No students were shot, bayoneted, or crushed by tanks. No one died in Tiananmen Square. No one died in Tiananmen Square. No one died in Tiananmen Square.

What really happened was a triumph of restraint and sacrifice by the brave troops who as they approached the square were viciously attacked by savage gangs of counterrevolutionary rioters armed, financed, and directed by "overseas reactionary political forces." Despite all their attempts to subdue the rioters, the troops were forced to open fire, for as General Li Zhiyun said, "The fact is, the army was forced to use violence to enter the city." But even then "it never happened that soldiers fired directly at the people." Indeed, as the general so clearly pointed out, "There was no such thing as bloodshed on Tiananmen Square. It is not from any instance from the soldiers directing their guns at the people. This incident never happened within the area of Beijing." Yes, it is true, the general also said, "If we didn't use military force we couldn't have cleared the Square," but then it never happened. No one died in Tiananmen Square.

The testimony of our own eyes cannot and should not be believed. The extensive videotaped scenes of the violence and death in Tiananmen Square simply misled you from the truth. After all, as Yuan Mu, the spokesperson for the government, made so clear, "The development of modern technology can allow people to turn out even a longer film to distort the truth of the matter." No one died in Tiananmen Square.

Nor can you believe rumor-mongering eyewitnesses such as Xiao Bin who claimed, "Tanks and armored personnel carriers rolled over students, squashing them into jam, and the soldiers shot at them and hit them with clubs. When students fainted, the troops killed them. After they died, the troops fired one more bullet into them. They also used bayonets." But those who know better reported this spreader of lies to the authorities. After the police "talked" with Bin, he confessed his lies on television. "I never saw anything. I apologize for bringing great harm to the Party and the country." He also admitted he was a counterrevolutionary. No one died in Tiananmen Square.

So too did Comrade Chou admit his error. The blood on his shirt was not that of people killed during the army's attack on the square. "I was wrong," Chou said. "The Party and the government have said that nobody was killed, and I made a mistake. I was influenced by bad elements and counterrevolutionaries. The blood on my shirt was surely that of a martyred soldier." No one died in Tiananmen Square.

Better to believe the four young men who testified, "We were in the northeast corner of the Great Hall of the People on the fourth floor. We had a clear view of the square and saw what happened. The army did not kill anyone or hurt anyone. It is not true that any students or common people were killed in Tiananmen Square." No one died in Tiananmen Square.

To guide you in your correct thinking and to ensure that you truly understand what really happened, the party provides the necessary guidance: "Without the Communist Party, there would be no China." "Love the Party, love the socialist motherland." As the loyal party member said, "What they really want is for you to say, 'We love Deng, we love the party and we love socialism.' And we all say it of course." No one died in Tiananmen Square.

Almost unconsciously he traced with his finger in the dust on the table: 2 + 2 = 5....it was all right, everything was all right, the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother.

--George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

No one died in Tiananmen Square.

Assignment: How does the essay "No One Died in Tiananmen Square" relate to the novel *1984*? Consider (at a bare minimum) both the Chinese government's use of doublethink and re-education, as well as how Lutz's style is reminiscent of *1984*.

“No One Died in Tiananmen Square” Assignment

1. Define three new, unusual, or confusing words. Provide the definition and the sentence it was used in.
2. What is the significance of the quotes provided at the beginning and end of this essay?
3. Identify at least 2 similarities and 2 differences between this essay and *1984*.
4. What do you think really happened at Tiananmen square? Provide textual evidence.