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6/4 Around the World: The First Sequel

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In our second installment of the series (for part one click [here](#)), we return to Japan (via a follow-up post by James Farrer on coverage in Tokyo) and offer a view from Hanoi (where long-time Reuters China correspondent John Ruwitch is now based and sometimes writes on themes that link or divide the two countries).

**John Ruwitch, Hanoi**

Six-four didn’t make its way into the official Vietnamese media, of course, but reports about it on CNN, which is widely available in Hanoi, were not censored. When I told a Vietnamese friend I found that mildly surprising, given the somewhat similar positions that the Chinese and Vietnamese Communist Parties find themselves in, plus their much-trumpeted friendship, she laughed and said: “But we hate the Chinese”.

Long history there, obviously.

I did not scour the VN blogosphere for info on six-four. I did notice, however, that a seasoned journalist/blogger called Huy Duc wrote a blog quoting from the newly published memoirs of one deposed and deceased CCP gen-sec whose name in Vietnamese is “Trieu Tu Duong”. Huy Duc discusses how DXP ultimately sided with Li Peng, leading to the crackdown, and comments: “There are men like Li Peng everywhere, but only in places where the fate of a nation lies in the hands of a few individuals could could a network of people be ground up by tanks like that.” At the end of the piece, the author concludes: “The aspirations of a people can never be crushed with tanks and bullets.” I thought that was fairly strong stuff coming from inside a country where the leadership, again, is engaged in a juggling act similar to that of its giant neighbour and freedom of speech is limited. Then again, the longer I’m in Vietnam, the more I wonder if the differences between the two out number the similarities.

**James Farrer, Tokyo**

The June 5th [Asahi Shinbum](#) provided the final installment of the week long series on the “Tiananmen Incident.” As did some of the earlier reports, this half-page feature provides portraits of participants in the 1989 protests and their current situations. The rhetorical emphasis of the articles is on the resilience of their views, despite the repression that immediately followed June 4 and the 20 years of imposed silence. One interview was with the former CCTV announcer Xue Fei who had displayed a notably tragic demeanor during his official announcement of martial law on May 20, and was subsequently fired. He later left China for Hungary in 1992, and returned in 2001 to teach television announcing skills in Beijing. According to the article this Asahi interview was the first time he had agreed to be interviewed in 20 years, but he has “no regrets” about his decision to support the protestors. Other interviews focused on protest participants who have continued as activists in China, including Pu Zhiqiang, a
lawyer who defends dissidents, Liang Xiaoyan, who leads an environment NGO, and Fu Guoyong, the dissident historian. The message and tone of the final installment of the series thus emphasizes the determination of a very small group of individuals to continue the fight for human rights despite their small numbers and the huge obstacles they face. The Japanese media, including the Asahi, present a generally pessimistic assessment of the possibilities of systemic political change in China (as in Japan, actually), but these stories of personal “resilience” seem to appeal to Japanese readers.

Note to my earlier post: the chart of protest leaders in the article I described referred only to students, not workers, and included the university affiliations of each individual.

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Tags: Tiananmen