

Lying down on railroad tracks; beating, smashing, and robbing; if these aren't turmoil then what are they? If things continue like this, we could even end up under house arrest.

After thinking long and hard about this, I've concluded that we should bring in the People's Liberation Army [PLA] and declare martial law in Beijing-more precisely, in Beijing's urban districts. The aim of martial law will be to suppress the turmoil once and for all and to return things quickly to normal. This is the unshirkable duty of the Party and the government. I am solemnly proposing this today to the Standing Committee of the Politburo and hope that you will consider it.

Zhao Ziyang: It's always better to have a decision than not to have one. But Comrade Xiaoping, it will be hard for me to carry out this plan. I have difficulties with it.

Deng Xiaoping: The minority yields to the majority!

Zhao Ziyang: I will submit to Party discipline; the minority does yield to the majority.

Standing Committee Stalemates

At 8 pm the meeting of the Politburo Standing Committee resumed at Zhongnanhai. Committee members Zhao Ziyang, Li Peng, Qiao Shi, Hu Qili, and Yao Yilin attended. Yang Shangkun and Bo Yibo participated in their role as party elders.

Excerpts from Party Central Office

Secretariat, "Minutes of the May 17

Politburo Standing Committee meeting":

Zhao Ziyang: The question for this evening's meeting is martial law. First we need to consider whether the situation has reached a point where martial law is our only option. Will martial law help solve the problem or only enlarge it? Is it in fact necessary to impose martial law? I hope we can discuss these questions calmly.

Li Peng: The decision on martial law, Comrade Ziyang, was made by Comrade Xiaoping at this morning's meeting. I support Comrade Xiaoping's views on martial law. I believe that the topic for the present meeting is not whether martial law should or should not be imposed but, rather, what steps to use in carrying it out.

Yao Yilin: I strongly support Comrade Xiaoping's proposal to impose martial law in Beijing's urban districts. Taking this powerful measure will help restore the city to normalcy, end the state of anarchy, and quickly and effectively stop the turmoil.

Zhao Ziyang: I'm against imposing martial law in Beijing. My reason is that, given the extreme feelings of the students at this juncture, to impose martial law will not help calm things down or solve problems. It will only make things more complicated and