

very nearly colliding with a student ambulance truck as I went. Sped around backstreets looking for offices, but everywhere that was phone-worthy was also a police post or a barracks, it seemed. I came out opposite the Beijing Jandian, and was only mildly surprised to see yet another contingent of tanks rolling down Changan Lu towards the square, firing away. They were still a couple of hundred metres away. Do I stay here, go back in the alley, get away from the fire. But then maybe I get boxed in there, and no phone. Do I cross in front of the tanks, get to the safety of the hotel, file the story? But then maybe I get shot, and Eddie will think himself justified in believing me a reckless fool.

By this time, I am halfway across the road, drop the bike, vault over the gate, belt up to the door, where there is a crowd of frightened Chinese and two terrified Australians. Behind the locked glass doors stands a row of spooks, unsmiling and relentless. A press card thumped to the glass doesn't help: 您請——F-16. Never have the Chinese looked so much like Soviets—