Once the Gang of Four had been overthrown in 1976, and Deng had been rehabilitated once again, it seemed as though he favoured a more liberal political approach.

At first, a Democracy Wall in Beijing was tolerated- but when students moved from attacking the Gang of Four to criticising Deng, and demanding democracy, his attitudes began to change. In December 1979, Democracy Wall was closed down.

During the 1980s, Deng’s political approach varied from some limited liberalisation to some campaigns against “bourgeois liberalisation”. While he carried out some reforms to the Party- including replacing older leaders with younger ones- he made it clear that he would maintain the CCP’s monopoly of political power.

However, his implementation of liberal economic policies increasingly resulted in demands from intellectuals and students for a similar liberalisation of politics. Meanwhile, from 1985 the effects of his economic policies- and of growing signs of corruption- were creating distress and dissatisfaction among many workers and peasants.

From late 1986, student protests again began to spread, with many calling for democracy. These Democracy Movement protests tailed off in early 1987- but because of his support of pro-democracy intellectuals, Hu Yaobang was dismissed as General-Secretary of the CCP.

Some protests occurred again in 1988 and in January 1989, Fang Lizhi, a leading intellectual, issued an Open Letter calling for the release of political prisoners.

This, and the death of Hu in April 1989, began a rapidly expanding number of student protests- the most famous of which took place in Tiananmen Square in Beijing. By May, these protests were often a million strong; and were increasingly supported by workers.

After much debate and hesitation, Deng’s government declared martial law, and the PLA was sent in to suppress the protests and clear the Square- with significant loss of life.

Afterwards, there were many arrests of ringleaders, and executions of workers who had joined the protests. Deng had made it clear that he had no intention of adopting a more democratic political system.