

From the Archives Chinese Crowds Block Troops

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BEIJING -- Chinese leaders Friday ordered soldiers into Beijing to attempt to restore order after a month of massive pro-democracy demonstrations, but residents swarmed to block the army's way.

By 8 a.m. today, more than 10 hours after the army advance began, the soldiers had made little headway into the city. Massive crowds swarmed around the army trucks, deflating tires and driving dump trucks and other heavy equipment into place to prevent them from moving.

Beijing Mayor Chen Xitong declared martial law in the urban areas of Beijing effective at 10 a.m. today. The order bans demonstrations, public petitions, strikes, boycotting of classes, spreading of rumors and distributing leaflets.

Networks Cut Off

The government ordered the Cable News Network to halt TV transmissions, and the American network ended its live coverage this morning. CBS also said its transmissions were stopped.

Authorities in other cities sought to deal locally with similar protests. In Shanghai, about 500 troops moved in early today to try to remove students demonstrating for democracy outside city government offices on the waterfront, Reuters news agency reported.

The troops were ordered into Beijing "to protect the normal functioning of important departments and central organs" because regular police were no longer able to ensure order, President Yang Shangkun said in a speech announcing the order.

During the past week, protests involving hundreds of thousands of ordinary citizens as well as students have demanded the resignations of [China's](#) senior leader, Deng Xiaoping, 84, and of Premier [Li Peng](#).

Advocate of Reform

[Communist Party](#) General Secretary [Zhao Ziyang](#), China's leading advocate of rapid economic and political reform, reportedly opposed the crackdown ordered today and has offered his resignation, according to Chinese sources who spoke with Western reporters.

It appeared that Zhao has been--and may still be--engaged in a power struggle with other leaders.

Zhao has not been severely criticized by the demonstrators, and some expressed growing support for him this morning. Zhao had sought over the past few days to defuse the student demonstrations by calling them patriotic and linking them to a program of accelerated political reforms that he has long favored.

At least 200,000 people were gathered in Tian An Men Square around noon today in a show of defiance just two hours after martial law took effect. Workers who rallied in the square beneath a banner reading "Capital Workers Independent Union" praised Zhao for his stand on the student protesters.

"Before, we didn't know Zhao Ziyang's attitude," one worker said. "Now we know, and we support him."

Premier Li and President Yang announced the military action in speeches aired on radio and television shortly after midnight. The speeches were repeatedly rebroadcast in the early morning hours over government-controlled loudspeakers in Tian An Men Square, where about 100,000 pro-democracy protesters, including students and ordinary citizens, had spent the night.

At the center of the protest was a continuing core of about 2,000 hunger strikers in the square, students who have won widespread public support in a fast now entering its eighth day. A total of more than 3,000 students have taken part in the fast. More than 1,000 have been removed to hospitals, but some of them have returned to the square after treatment, according to medical personnel at the square.

"The capital is in a critical situation," Li said in his speech, made to a large meeting of high-ranking Communist Party and government officials. "A situation of anarchy is getting more and more serious. . . . On behalf of the Communist Party Central Committee and the State Council, I now call on the whole party, the whole army and the whole nation to make concerted efforts and act immediately at all posts so as to stop the turmoil and stabilize the situation."

The speeches of Li and Yang, the order for troops to move into Beijing, and the reaction of students and city residents to these decisions escalated the crisis faced by the government.

There were indications that the sentiment of most students and residents--at least those active in the protests--favored Zhao, who had made extremely conciliatory comments in a televised visit to student hunger strikers in Tian An Men Square on Friday morning.

One of the workers standing behind the union banner said it was of a new, independent citywide workers' union organized Friday afternoon.

"Soon the whole country will go on strike to support the students' patriotic movement," this man said.

Several workers said the protest movement is now aimed at supporting Zhao in what is perceived as a struggle with other leaders.

"Zhao Ziyang loves the country," one of these workers said. "He is at one with the students."

It appeared that no more than a few hundred army trucks, each carrying about 40 soldiers, were trying to enter the city overnight and that they were initially trying to avoid using force against those standing in their way.

Late this morning, about 3,000 people blocked three convoy trucks and a half dozen vehicles that appeared to be water cannons. The officer in charge of the group spoke for a few minutes with protesters on the back of a flatbed truck positioned to block the convoy's way. He then borrowed an electric megaphone from the demonstrators and declared to the crowd:

"We were not told the truth. We will leave and we will not be back. We are the people's army."

The crowd cheered wildly, and he saluted several times as the convoy drove away.

Elsewhere, though, there were scattered reports of clashes. According to United Press International, an American television crew filmed police near Tian An Men Square beating protesters with billyclubs.

Reuters reported that witnesses told it workers and peasants battled unarmed troops on the main road leading into Beijing 12 miles south of the city. At least one soldier was carried away unconscious after the 20-minute melee, the witnesses said.

Many of the soldiers and officers blocked by residents and students, however, did not appear greatly upset, and many said that they had not known about the scale of demonstrations in Beijing over the past week. Both Wednesday and Thursday, half a million or more people demonstrated in the streets of Beijing and in Tian An Men Square in support of the students' pro-democracy and anti-corruption demands. Some estimates placed the number of support demonstrators as high as 1 million.

Reports were already circulating among Chinese in Beijing on Thursday that the elite 38th Army, which has primary responsibility for protecting the capital, had refused to move against the demonstrators.

Premier Li charged that "a very small number of people" who seek to overthrow communism were behind the past month's protests.

"They spread rumors and smear party and government leaders," Li said. "They concentrate their attack on Comrade Deng Xiaoping, who has made great contributions. . . . Their purpose is to overthrow the people's government . . . and totally negate the people's democratic dictatorship. They stir up trouble everywhere, establish secret ties, set up illegal organizations and force the party and government to recognize them. In doing so they attempted to lay a foundation to set up opposition factions and opposition parties in China. If they succeed, the reform and opening to the outside world, democracy and legality and socialist modernization would all come to nothing."

Large numbers of people in Beijing, however, appeared to be on the side of students who provoked the crisis with their hunger strike and sit-down demonstration in Tian An Men Square. The students have been demanding that a top government leader meet with their leaders in a public, televised dialogue on ways to

accelerate democratic reforms. The protests began in mid-May with general demands for press freedom, improved treatment of intellectuals and more effective measures against corruption.

At Shuangjing, on the southeastern side of Beijing, a dozen army trucks carrying a total of about 500 apparently unarmed soldiers were unable to move this morning after workers parked a construction crane and other vehicles to block their way forward and eight earth-moving trucks to block their retreat.

"Support Ziyang," someone in the crowd had chalked on the side of one truck, referring to Zhao, the embattled Communist Party chief, by his given name.

Zhao was not visible in the televised broadcast of Li's and Yang's speeches, nor was Deng, who, as chairman of the Central Military Commission, is commander in chief of the armed forces.

Crowds of people were also seen blocking army trucks on the west side of Beijing. Youths climbed onto the trucks, attached slogans to their sides and deflated their tires.

Workers positioned buses and dump trucks at key intersections around Beijing to block army access to the city.

Several military helicopters flew over the city this morning, apparently on observation flights, and then flew off.

In the Wukesong area in western Beijing, students lectured young soldiers on their cause.

"The top leaders, they have all stolen from the working people. That is why we are fighting them," a student declared to a truckload of soldiers blocked by the crowd.

Tank Column Reported

Several miles south of the city center, a reporter for United Press International reported seeing a column of 20 tanks halted, while civilians climbed over them and soldiers allowed children to stand in the turret hatches.

Elsewhere in the city, workers knelt before big green troop trucks filled with soldiers and slashed the tires, one American said, and students commandeered buses and parked them at a main intersection to stall a convoy.

In one neighborhood, crowds linked arms across a main street to keep a parked convoy of troop trucks from moving. An angry middle-aged woman climbed aboard one truck and demanded of the soldiers, "Where's your conscience?"

Premier Li, in his address, declared that "the situation in Beijing is still worsening, and has already affected many other cities in the country."

"In many places, the number of demonstrators and protesters is increasing," Li said. "In some places, there have occurred many incidents in which people broke into local party and government organs, along with beating, smashing, looting, burnings and other undermining activities that seriously violated the law."

"Recently, even some trains running on major railway lines such as the Beijing-Guangzhou line, a north-south trunk line, were intercepted, causing communications to stop."

In Washington, the [State Department](#) said the United States regrets that China ordered the military action restricting the freedom of the student-led protesters.

There have been reports that protesters in the central China city of Wuhan temporarily blocked a main north-south rail line that crosses the Yangtze River at Wuhan.

"All these have shown that this will lead to a nationwide turmoil if no quick action is taken to turn and stabilize the situation," Li said. "The nation's reforms and opening to the outside world, and the fate and future of the People's Republic are facing serious threat."

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