

From the Archives Protesters Retain Control of Square

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BEIJING -- Defiance of martial law by masses of Beijing residents and power struggles within the Chinese leadership left pro-democracy protesters still in control of central Beijing at noon today.

For about 50,000 student demonstrators gathered in the central part of Tian An Men Square and at least an equal number of citizen supporters surrounding them, a night of fear marked by rumors of an impending attack gave way to a dawn of cautious hope.

"The longer we sit here, the closer we get to victory," one student said soon after sunrise.

A trainload of about 1,500 soldiers armed with AK-47 automatic rifles sat this morning at the central train station, making no attempt to leave their coaches.

Sunday evening and into the night, students and other protesters had surrounded the train inside the station, while crowds outside blocked the way to Tian An Men Square, less than two miles to the west.

This morning, barricades of city buses remained in place on streets near the station, but the students and protesting crowds were gone. A bicycle rickshaw driver said they had left because they believed the soldiers had no intention of advancing on the square.

On the outskirts of the capital, citizens manned barricades of buses and trucks that blocked the advance of an estimated 20,000 to 40,000 soldiers in army trucks and armored personnel carriers who had been ordered into Beijing from outlying areas.

Some troops--apparently soldiers already inside the city when martial law was declared Saturday morning--have been positioned to protect important government buildings and institutions in the capital, according to a report on state-run radio Sunday evening.

With China in crisis after a month of escalating pro-democracy protests, demonstrators are demanding the resignations of Premier **Li Peng**, 60, and senior leader **Deng Xiaoping**, 84, whose position as chairman of the Central Military Commission makes him commander in chief of the armed forces.

Communist Party General Secretary **Zhao Ziyang**, 69, who opposed the attempted martial-law crackdown, is widely believed to have submitted his resignation. Many people presume that Zhao has been placed under some form of house arrest.

A brief news report on state-run television this morning said that students had visited the home of retired army Marshal Xu Xiangqian to express concern that the army seems about to move against the protesters. Xu reportedly told them: "The military men do not want to have an incident of bloodshed and will take all possible

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protesting students visited the home of retired marshal Nie Hongzhen and submitted a letter claiming that Premier Li had presided over a meeting Sunday afternoon that had decided:

- The student movement is a rebellion.
- The student demonstrators in Tian An Men Square must be suppressed.
- All major jails in the capital should prepare to imprison more people.
- All the street-sweeping vehicles of the capital had been requested to clean Tian An Men Square at 5 a.m. today.

Labeled as Rumors

Nie was reported to have replied that the four points were purely rumors and should not be believed. He told the students that the troops are coming to safeguard social order and stability and that "the students should assist the People's Liberation Army in their mission."

The students should withdraw from the square for the sake of "national dignity, order in Beijing, urban life and their own health and study," Nie told the students, according to this report. The same report was also made public by the official New China News Agency.

Nie, 90, and Xu, 88, are retired officers and former Politburo members who played important roles in the 1949 Communist revolution. At least two days before the declaration of martial law, word circulated among Chinese officials and Communist Party members that some army commanders were refusing to use force to suppress the pro-democracy demonstrations.

The wave of protests began in mid-April, pegged at first to mourning for Hu Yaobang, the reformist former head of the Communist Party who died of a heart attack April 15. They developed into demands for a free press, better treatment of intellectuals and an attack on corruption.

Hunger Strike

On May 13, about 1,000 students began a hunger strike in Tian An Men Square. Over subsequent days, the number of participants grew to more than 3,000, but of that number, more than 1,000 were taken to hospitals by ambulances whose blaring sirens added to the atmosphere of growing crisis.

On Wednesday and Thursday last week, at least half a million people--some estimates placed the number at 1 million--swarmed through the streets of Beijing and Tian An Men Square to support the hunger strikers and demand the resignations of Li and Deng. All but a handful of hunger strikers have now ended their fast, saying that it has become meaningless because the government is heartless.

The Martial Law Enforcement Headquarters of the People's Liberation Army issued a statement Sunday evening, broadcast by radio and television and carried by the New China News Agency, that pleaded with citizens to allow the army to enter the city. It also seemed to threaten the use of force if the public continues to block the access of the troops.

"At present, social order in the capital remains in great confusion, transportation is held up, some commodities are in short supply, the public order may further deteriorate and the people are deeply disturbed and worried," the statement said. "The troops imposing martial law must firmly carry out orders of the government, and they have the duty to adopt various effective measures to put an end to the situation.

"As for the very few criminals who beat, smash, loot and burn, the troops will . . . adopt firm measures to dispose of them. The headquarters hope the majority of patriotic students and people of all circles fully understand and give forceful support and assistance."

No Reports of Rioting

The phrase "beat, smash, loot and burn" is a standard description used by Chinese authorities to describe rioting. There have been no reports of rioting in the capital.

During the night at the square, groups of workers shouted "Down with Li Peng! Down with corruption! We are the citizens of Beijing!" and carried banners declaring "Down with Li Peng!"

Shortly before dawn, a man who identified himself as an army officer spoke to the crowd, neither in support nor severe criticism but with a plea for maintenance of order.

"I ask you students to keep order in Tian An Men Square," the man said. "If you get out of order, the army will come and will be forced to use violence. If you keep order, we will not use violence."

Students listened attentively to the speech, and then, knowing that many troops were blockaded at the outskirts of the city, began chanting: "Can't come in! Can't come in!"

Students explained that the officer had been allowed to speak because the students want to keep lines of communication open to the army and were anxious to know what the government and army planned.

A basic strategy of the protesters is to communicate as much as possible with the army and ordinary citizens so that there is the widest possible understanding of their struggle, students said.

Many of the soldiers stopped at the outskirts of the city had not been allowed access to newspaper or television reports for about 10 days, during which the Chinese media have carried reports about the demonstrations, according to Chinese who spoke with them.

At various locations in the outskirts of the capital, convoys of army trucks and armored personnel carriers remained stopped at barricades manned by citizens who sought to explain the protesters' cause.

Fear of Shortages

The disruption of traffic into the city has begun to cause fears of food shortages, forcing prices of some items to double.

Beijing Vice Mayor Zhang Baifa appeared on television to urge a removal of the barricades. He said the city's supplies of coal, liquid petroleum gas and staple foods are in danger of running short.

During the pre-dawn hours today, student leaders in Tian An Men Square conducted a public debate, over loudspeakers, on whether to remain in the square or disperse.

Some students argued in favor of a retreat to campuses for rest and food to provide strength to continue the struggle.

"We are supported by the workers and all the citizens, so we should not withdraw," one student argued in response.

Another declared: "If we withdraw, we will bear a heavy responsibility to history. . . . Never withdraw! Never withdraw!"

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