

Chinese Students March for Democracy

By NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF and SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES APRIL 18, 1989

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Several thousand students marched through the capital in predawn hours today, chanting democratic slogans and singing revolutionary songs as they mourned the ousted Communist Party leader Hu Yaobang and called for a more democratic government.

The demonstration was the most significant sign of unrest in China since student demonstrations for democracy were crushed more than two years ago.

One student leader announced to a cheering crowd that the students had three demands: an official reappraisal of Mr. Hu, an apology from the Government for various unspecified mistakes, and a "collective resignation," apparently of all the country's leaders.

Later, other student leaders added further demands, such as democratic elections, the release of China's political prisoners, and freedom of the press.

The students were ostensibly mourning the death Saturday of Mr. Hu, whom they regarded as a protector of intellectuals. But the mourning seemed overshadowed by displays of protest. 'We Want Democracy' "We want democracy," explained a radio electronics student from Beijing University as he walked his bicycle with the other marchers. "Hu Yaobang's death is not the reason for this demonstration. It is the excuse."

The demonstration was organized shortly after midnight today at Beijing University, the most important educational institution in the nation and the one that the children of many high officials attend. A snowballing crowd of students marched from building to building, calling for reinforcements.

At one point the crowd broke down the door of a women's dormitory that had been locked to keep the residents inside after the curfew.

The demonstration was a clear challenge to the Government, but even the students say they have no idea if there will be further protests.

The students' enthusiasm for mourning Mr. Hu is an embarrassment to China's top leaders, since they forced his resignation just over two years ago after nationwide student demonstrations calling for more democracy. Moreover, there is an extra edge to such signs of mourning here, because everyone remembers that April 1976 demonstrations to mourn Zhou Enlai turned into anti-Government riots.

Those demonstrations, as well as today's, were held in Tiananmen Square, the center of Beijing and the political focal point of China. Some Looking for a Good Time

Today the demonstrators seemed high-spirited, and many seemed more interested in a good time than in other causes.

The early morning demonstration was the second in the capital in 12 hours. In the afternoon more than 500 students from another university marched on Tiananmen Square to place a wreath in Mr. Hu's honor at a memorial and to press for more democracy.

The Associated Press quoted an American student as saying that in Shanghai on Sunday night, more than 1,000 students marched and sang revolutionary songs to honor Mr. Hu.

In the predawn demonstration, the Beijing University students decided to march for 10 miles to Tiananmen Square, bypassing People's University, where they summoned their friends to join the march. At that point there were probably more than 4,000 people gathered, but nearly half dropped out along the route.

The authorities did not interfere, except to divert traffic away from key intersections. While such demonstrations normally are illegal, the police appeared eager to avoid a confrontation. They declined to say whether the march was legal or illegal, although one said that an expression of mourning was permitted.

Once the police appeared particularly nervous: when the marchers paused at

the entrance to Zhongnanhai, the walled compound where many of Chinese leaders work and live. Several police cars rushed up, and the marchers sang the "Internationale," the anthem of revolutionary workers, as they walked on.

At Tiananmen Square, the students erected a huge white banner that honored Mr. Hu and proclaimed him the "soul of China."

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