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100,000 Defy a Ban on Protests In Beijing to Demand Democracy

By NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF and SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES APRIL 22, 1989

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A crowd defying a ban on public protests swelled to more than 100,000 Friday night in Beijing's central square to press demands for more democracy. It was by far the biggest protest in China since the end of the Maoist era more than a dozen years ago.

Tens of thousands of university students later camped all night in the square, to foiling Government plans to close off the area in the morning and keep them from holding a mass rally today.

As the students chanted for democracy, China's top officials, guarded by the military, entered the Great Hall of the People this morning for memorial ceremonies for the former Communist Party leader, Hu Yaobang, whose death last week touched off the demonstrations.

The sheer size of the crowd and the level of dissatisfaction it reflected seemed certain to put new pressure on the Government, although no one seemed to know whether China's leaders are more likely to react with concessions or with a crackdown.

In a sign of Government apprehension, the official Communist Party newspaper, People's Daily, today published a fierce criticism of the students.

"Those who take advantage of the mourning for Comrade Yaobang and charge,

smash, rob, or set fire to offices of the Communist Party or the Government will be condemned by history," an editorial said. Unusual Lapse of Control

"Up to now, in dealing with the very small number of people doing these unlawful activities, the Government has been restrained," it continued. "If some people consider this weakness, they will have to face the bitter consequences."

In a country where control has been a way of life - Government officials assign people jobs, determine where they may live, and decide how many children they may have - the illegal protests represented an extraordinary lapse of control.

Students who normally avoid political issues that might blot their personnel files seemed carried away with an uncharacteristic political ferocity that is likely to have a significant effect on politics if it can be sustained.

"We will die for freedom!" students from Beijing University chanted in the pre-dawn hours this morning as they arrived in the square after a three-hour march from their campus. Others carried such banners as "Press Freedom," and the crowd relished the ironies as it sang the opening line of China's national anthem: "Rise up, you who refuse to be slaves."

For the first time, the students seemed to make a major effort to bring workers into the demonstrations. Some shouted "Beijing citizens, follow us!" as they marched to Tiananmen Square, and others raised economic issues such as inflation and speculation by officials that are much more likely to strike a chord with workers than the nebulous calls for a more democratic political system.

While the demonstrations continue to be dominated by students and intellectuals, many workers joined the rallies today, and they seemed more enthusiastic than they have been in past days. That is likely to worry Chinese officials, who have counted on the unrest's being confined to students.

The Government appeared to miscalculate Friday morning when it announced that the area around Tiananmen Square would be closed all this morning to avoid traffic problems during the official memorial service for Mr. Hu.

Students had announced their own plans to hold an unofficial memorial rally for Mr. Hu, whose death has sparked nearly continuous demonstrations for more democracy, and the Government's announcement seemed an attempt to discourage the student gathering. Mr. Hu was forced to resign as party leader after student protests in December 1986 and January 1987.

Instead of dropping their plans for a mass rally, the students decided on short notice to arrive late Friday night and early this morning so they would be in place

on the square by the time the area was closed. About 40,000 students marched from their campuses, mostly hand in hand down main roads, and sat down in the square, vowing not to leave.

While more than 2,000 policemen and soldiers were deployed to protect the leaders attending this morning's memorial service and to seal off the area, they did not attempt to remove the students from the square. Students and their supporters took over not only the square but neighboring Changan Avenue, the main road of Beijing.

The students' formal demands include a positive reappraisal of Mr. Hu, the repudiation of recent crackdowns on intellectuals by the Communist Party, the public disclosure of the income and assets of China's leaders and their children, and permission to hold demonstrations. Protest rallies are illegal, but the authorities have not interfered so far in the nearly continuous demonstrations in the last four days. Freedom a Common Theme

In their slogans and in interviews, however, most students speak much more broadly of democracy as their goal. Some seem to have little conception of what they want, but they express many common themes: freedom of expression and especially an independent press, free elections in which anyone can compete, and strict application of the law to prevent corruption by relatives of those in power.

"We like the American political system," a physics graduate student said, taking time off from chanting slogans. "We have read about the freedom to speak out in the United States, and many of us have studied there. Of course it cannot happen suddenly here, but maybe it can happen eventually. We hope demonstrations will help it happen."

Yan Xinghua, a 24-year-old journalism student and member of the Communist Youth League, said: "It's hard to say if this effort will succeed or not. We have to try. Even if we risk a crackdown, this is something we must do."

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