

VIOLENT PROTESTS REPORTED IN CHINA

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A week of growing anti-Government protests turned violent for the first time on Saturday, spreading to the central Chinese city of Xian, where protesters attacked the provincial Government headquarters, injuring 130 officers and burning 20 houses, the official New China News Agency reported this morning.

The rioting, which included an attack on foreign tourists, continued for about 12 hours, the agency said. The volatile situation in Xian presented the Government with the substantial new challenge of controlling major unrest not only in Beijing but in other cities.

While pro-democracy demonstrations have taken place in several cities since the death on April 15 of the former Communist Party leader, Hu Yaobang, Saturday's violence seemed likely to force the Government, which so far has acted with relative restraint to almost continuous demonstrations in the capital, to take a firmer line against the protesters.

In Beijing, the Government leaders could see the challengers directly, when more than 70,000 university students rallied on Saturday in central Tiananmen Square, defeating the authorities' attempts to seal off the center of the capital. The students mourned Mr. Hu by shouting demands for more democracy as the nation's leaders held their own official memorial service next door.

The students' triumph over Government attempts to block the rally was a significant embarrassment for China's leaders, who called out thousands of army troops and the police to shield themselves from the students.

The authorities apparently had planned to clear the square, but they changed their minds in the pre-dawn hours after tens of thousands of people began camping there to be sure that they would not be kept out by a police cordon to be set up later.

The authorities concluded that the students were too numerous to dislodge by peaceful means, according to a Chinese journalist familiar with the Government's thinking. He added that security forces regarded the student demonstrations as among the most serious challenges they have faced.

The Xian incident began on Saturday after people had gathered in a central square to watch the official memorial service on television. The crowd included students who were generally orderly and "some lawbreakers" who shouted anti-Government slogans, the New China News Agency reported.

The protesters forced their way into the Government compound, and then set fire to several rooms and 10 vehicles, the agency said. They also attacked a bus carrying foreign tourists, smashing its windows, the report said, and later pulled down a wall in the Government compound and robbed a garment shop. No one was reported killed, and 18 people were arrested. The agency said the area became quiet at midnight. Workers Possibly Involved

It was not clear if the "lawbreakers" were students or workers, but the term is often used to describe groups of tough young workers who are not overtly political but who constitute a growing security problem in many parts of China. The fact that they attacked foreigners also suggests that they may have been workers instead of students, who tend to be more friendly to overseas visitors.

In the Beijing demonstration on Saturday, tens of thousands of other students and workers apparently wanted to join the illegal rally, but were kept away by a police cordon established in the early morning hours.

The students left the square Saturday afternoon, and most said they were too exhausted after being up all night to think of whether there would be further demonstrations. But there were indications that the unrest would continue, though not at the same level.

The students said they would boycott classes until May 4, the 70th anniversary of nationalist demonstrations that are among the most famous episodes in recent

Chinese history.

The outpouring of respect for Mr. Hu since his death a week ago has surprised almost everybody. He seemed to take on new stature in the eyes of students after he was forced to resign after student demonstrations in the winter of 1986-87, and today many students regard him as a symbol both of political liberalization and honest government. Unlike many other Chinese leaders, Mr. Hu never was criticized for allowing family members to capitalize on his position.

Student mourning for him turned into nearly a week of increasingly large demonstrations calling for greater democracy in China. During Saturday's rally, the students listened to the official memorial service inside the Great Hall of the People as it was broadcast through giant speakers on Tiananmen Square. Afterward, the students gradually drifted away without any speeches or other activities.

The official memorial service was attended by China's top leaders, including the senior leader Deng Xiaoping, Prime Minister Li Peng and the Communist Party leader, Zhao Ziyang. Two elderly officials who reportedly were among Mr. Hu's strongest critics when he was forced to resign - Chen Yun and Bo Yibo - did not attend. Zhao Gives Brief Eulogy

Mr. Zhao, who gave the brief eulogy, did not mention Mr. Hu's forced resignation or the recent student demonstrations. Most of the eulogy was devoted to recounting Mr. Hu's career, but Mr. Zhao also urged people to rally around the Communist Party Central Committee. He described Mr. Hu as a man "brave enough to admit his mistakes and to insist on what he thought was right."

One of those who attended the official service said in a brief interview tonight that the students' shouts were inaudible to those inside, but that people heard them loudly as they entered and left the Great Hall of the People.

Mr. Deng, 84 years old, China's senior leader, is increasingly unpopular and may resign this year from his last official position, as head of the Central Military Commission. Mr. Zhao has lost some support within the party and the public because he is often associated with bold policies that have been widely blamed for inflation and other difficulties.

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