

China Bans Pro-Student Newspaper

By NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF and SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES APRIL 25, 1989

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In its firmest action so far to stem the growing student campaign for more democracy, the Communist Party today banned an issue of a popular newspaper that published comments openly supporting the demonstrators.

As the paper was banned today, tens of thousands of university students in the capital began an indefinite boycott of classes to press their demands for more democracy and a freer press. It appeared that almost all students at Beijing's universities were honoring the boycott, and student leaders said they would send delegations to factories to solicit support from workers.

The latest issue of the banned weekly newspaper, The World Economic Herald, had already been printed and contained some of the boldest criticisms of the Communist Party ever published in a major Chinese newspaper. But the party today prohibited the distribution of the newspaper, according to Chinese familiar with the order.

Qin Benli, the editor in chief of the Shanghai-based newspaper, which has a circulation of 300,000, was not in the office this afternoon. The deputy editor in chief, Zhu Xinqun, confirmed in a telephone interview that the newspaper was not distributed today as it normally is on Mondays. Mr. Zhu declined to say why it did not appear. Apparently a One-Time Ban

Several people familiar with the banning said that a Politburo member, Jiang Zemin, who is also party leader in Shanghai, gave the order that The Herald could not be distributed. It was not clear if the order originated with him or someone higher.

It appeared that only this issue was affected, and that the newspaper might be reprinted later in the week with the offending articles removed. Mr. Qin, who is 70 years old, was nearly forced into retirement early this year after The Herald published an essay criticizing the Communist Party, and there were fears that the latest episode might speed up his retirement.

A copy of the paper, obtained today despite the ban on distribution, made clear why the authorities were upset. The first six pages are about Hu Yaobang, the ousted party leader whose death on April 15 set off the pro-democracy demonstrations that have continued ever since. Perhaps the most sensitive section is a selection of reminiscences and comments by prominent friends of Mr. Hu, who was criticized and forced to resign in disgrace in 1987 after nationwide student protests.

"The main problem China has had, up to today, is the lack of democracy," the newspaper quotes Yan Jiaqi, one of the nation's top political scholars, as saying. "A handful of people can just talk among themselves and put aside the interests of the Chinese people, and then reach an unpopular decision." 'Stabbed Him in the Back'

Mr. Yan expressed strong sympathy for the student demonstrators and their demands. In an apparent reference to two senior party officials, Deng Liqun and Hu Qiaomu, Mr. Yan said: "Some people who were in charge of ideology have no right to mourn Hu. They stabbed him in the back. They should be tried by history."

Dai Qing, a prominent writer, was quoted as saying about the forced resignation: "It was a total violation of our organizational principles and procedures. Besides, he was forced to make a self-criticism against his will. In my opinion, that was the most miserable thing in his life."

Wu Mingyu, an official in China's State Council, or cabinet, was quoted by The Herald as saying that Mr. Hu had acknowledged two regrets in his life. The first was his failure to protect a colleague who was wrongly accused in the 1950's of being a rightist. The second was his self-criticism when he stepped down.

In a sign of the importance that the leadership places on support from the press during the unrest, Hu Qili, one of five members of the Politburo standing committee, met Wednesday with editors of major papers to advise them not to

cover the student demonstrations lest they inflame the situation, according to journalists who said they heard about the meeting from people who were there.

In addition to The World Economic Herald, at least one Beijing newspaper ignored the warning. The Science and Technology Daily printed a long and sympathetic article about the demonstrations as well as six photos.

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