

150,000 March in Defiance of Beijing

By NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF and SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES APRIL 28, 1989

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More than 150,000 demonstrators openly defied official warnings and a concentration of troops today to march for 14 hours through the capital, repeatedly and effortlessly puncturing lines of policemen and soldiers sent to stop them, in one of the biggest displays of dissatisfaction in 40 years of Communist rule.

The student-organized demonstration in support of democracy and against corruption was a stunning humiliation for the Government, which responded this evening by agreeing conditionally to the students' demand for discussions with officials.

Most worrying for the authorities was the fact that crowds of cheering workers lined the entire route and hailed the core of student marchers almost as a liberating army. Workers vigorously applauded the students, waved encouragement from office windows, and frequently sent them food and drinks to show support. Soldiers Are Surrounded

On at least three occasions thousands of workers surrounded hundreds of soldiers and prevented them from approaching student marchers.

Workers sometimes pushed aside police blockades even before the students drew near, and the marchers in the four-mile-long parade were easily outnumbered by supporters who walked and bicycled along with them for at least

part of the way.

Beijing residents said the security forces, including army troops called in from surrounding areas, had made their greatest show of force in recent memory, but it was dwarfed by the sea of demonstrators.

Including the onlookers who waved and cheered as the parade went by, perhaps half a million people took part one way or another, often climbing trees and lampposts when there was no ground to stand on.

The only comparable protest came in the first week of April 1976 when angry crowds gathered in Tiananmen Square to mourn the death of Prime Minister Zhou Enlai and oppose the "Gang of Four" then in power. Several Chinese who took part in both demonstrations said the one today involved more people and more general defiance of the authorities, who had warned of a crackdown on demonstrators.

New Themes Are Raised

For the first time, the pro-democracy movement, which in the past has been overwhelmingly limited to students and intellectuals, seemed to draw fervent support from others. The students encouraged this not only by pressing their previous demands, like freedom of the press and more money for education, but also by raising populist themes like official corruption and inflation.

The perception of Government impotence was most vivid when the crowds burst through the last police barricade to get to Tiananmen Square in the center of the capital. Nearly 1,000 soldiers in 20 trucks did not flee quickly enough and mobs swarmed around them, clambering onto the hoods and sides of the vehicles and appearing ready at first to lynch the troops. But when it became obvious that the soldiers were terrified and thinking only of retreat, the mobs cleared a way for them to escape.

Shouts of "Brothers, go home and till your fields" could be heard from the crowd as the trucks raced off.

Aside from some shoving, there was no violence. Indeed, students once rescued soldiers sent to block their march. Several truckloads of troops were surrounded by angry mobs, who allowed them to leave only when persuaded to do so by students waving their university identification badges. An Appeal to the Workers

"We're deeply moved by the students' audacity," said a young Government ministry official who came out of his office to applaud as the students passed. "They say what is in our hearts."

The procession was full of signs and banners, ranging from "Vive la liberte," erected by French-language students, to a large black banner aimed at workers: "You work but you get nothing; your life is bitter."

The students were far better organized than they have been in the past, and some with megaphones were assigned to rally worker support. When the march passed a large factory, whose gate was promptly locked, a student made a small speech:

"Dear workers, we are all citizens, and we all have the right of free movement. If anyone stops you from getting out and joining us, that's against the Constitution."

Of the 150,000 or more marchers, about half were organized students carrying banners and the rest were workers or students taking part on their own. One worker who marched was Zhou Jingping, a library clerk, who said he was an enthusiastic supporter of the students.

"Inflation has given us a lot of difficulties because prices rise but salaries don't," Mr. Zhou said. "Students voice that desire of ours to suppress the inflation. And then there's corruption. Bribery is evident everywhere, and people are sick of it. Education is another reason - the Government hasn't paid enough attention to education."

To many workers, the students seemed to represent not a focused, alternative agenda, but simply a cry of discontent that struck a deep chord.

"They represent people's thinking, the sense that we the people are in control," said one of the marchers, Lin Yulin, a 52-year-old worker wearing a Mao Zedong button as a sign of his discontent. "The leaders cover everything up. People don't know anything, and we are no longer the masters. That's why there is this uprising."

The outpouring of support for the students was humiliating for the entire leadership, but for no one so much as the senior leader, Deng Xiaoping. In the last 10 days of protests, the students have often expressed contempt for Mr. Deng, and he more than anyone appears to have been behind the hard line that the Government has taken in the last few days. Harsh Words From Deng? Chinese with close Communist Party connections say the Politburo raised the matter of student unrest this week and asked Mr. Deng for his views. He is said to have answered particularly harshly, saying that if necessary some blood could be spilled and that repression would not seriously harm China's image in the world.

The students said tonight that they would continue their boycott of classes and some predicted that there would be more demonstrations on May 1 and May 4. It was not clear how the students would regard the Government's offer of discussions, which was a major concession but which appeared to be linked to the students' willingness to avoid street demonstrations.

The Government appeared dumbfounded by the size of the day's demonstration, and the television news did not mention it tonight. The official New China News Agency mentioned it briefly and suggested its effect only indirectly when reporting that it had caused "huge traffic tie-ups" affecting 300,000 people.

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