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STUDENTS IN CHINA FLOOD MAIN SQUARE

By **SHERYL WUDUNN** and **SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES** MAY 15, 1989

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Thousands of university students occupied Beijing's central square through the night, defying Government plans to seal off the area. They said they wanted to hold their own welcoming ceremony for Mikhail S. Gorbachev, the Soviet leader, who arrived today for the first Chinese-Soviet summit meeting in 30 years.

Unable to seal off the square and embarrassed by the presence of the demonstrators, the Government canceled plans to hold the official welcoming ceremony there and moved it to the Beijing airport.

There, amid the sounds of a 21-gun salute, President Yang Shangkun met Mr. Gorbachev after the Soviet chief arrived by plane from the Soviet Union.

Some students recognized the Government action as a minor step in the right direction. "We think it is a concession," said Wang Zahao, a 37-year-old student leader from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. "But we still have a long way to go in protecting human rights in China."

About 2,200 hunger strikers sat huddled in the center of the square, and more than 10,000 students from other universities spent the night crowded around to support them.

By this morning, the hunger strikers had drawn crowds of 80,000 or more, mostly supportive. Students from campuses all over the capital had marched to

Tiananmen Square on Sunday to press demands for democracy and for a dialogue with the Government.

"Welcome, Mr. Gorbachev, the true reformer," read a banner that the students held aloft in a rebuke to China's own leadership. Largest Rally Since May 4

The demonstration, the largest since May 4, when 100,000 workers and students gathered to back their demands for more democracy and less corruption in Government, presented an embarrassing challenge to the Government at a time of serious tensions at the top levels of the Communist Party.

Senior Government officials, including the Minister of Education, Li Tieying, met with student leaders on Sunday, but students said the talks were disrupted when the Government said it was unable to meet student demands to broadcast the discussion live. On Sunday night, the television news carried a brief report on the dialogue.

One student representative said this morning that Yan Mingfu, a senior Communist Party official who shares the enthusiasm for rapid liberalization of the party leader, Zhao Ziyang, hinted on Sunday night during the negotiations that the students should refrain from pushing too hard, because it might play into the hands of those who favor more cautious development.

Students say they have staged a hunger strike to back their three main demands: Government officials should hold direct talks with them and televise the discussions live; the Government should publish a favorable re-evaluation of the student movement; and the Government should retract an April 26 editorial in the official People's Daily that harshly criticized the students. 'Citizens Voice Their Support'

All day and evening on Sunday, spectators poured into the square. In the first sign of organized participation by citizens, scores of people marched behind a wide red banner that read, "The citizens voice their support."

Chen Subin, a 22-year-old student from Beijing University, said that he had not eaten since Saturday afternoon but that he would stay on the square indefinitely. "I will stay as long as I can," said Mr. Chen.

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