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CHINA ORDERS END TO TV BROADCASTS

By CONSTANCE L. HAYS MAY 20, 1989

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As American viewers watched live television coverage from China last night, Chinese officials ordered the networks to cease transmitting pictures and commentary from a portable station set up in Beijing.

The officials contended that the news restrictions were legitimate because the American networks were in China to cover the visit of Mikhail S. Gorbachev, the Soviet leader, and that visit was over. But the move appeared to be part of a general that came with the Government's crackdown on the student protests in Beijing.

The White House spokesman, Marlin Fitzwater, said in a statement in Kennebunkport, Me., that "the announcement of a news blackout is very disturbing and we urge that it not signal an end to appropriate restraint or an end to dialogue with the students." NBC Also Shut Down

A move against Cable News Network, which went into effect this morning in Beijing - last night in the United States -also shut down transmissions by NBC News. That network was sharing equipment with CNN, an NBC spokesman said.

Shortly after noon, a Government official delivered an order that told CBS News to stop broadcasting. A CBS News technician then reached up and yanked the plug out of the network's microwave transmitter, and the live broadcast from Beijing stopped.

As with CNN, the officials said CBS News was permitted to cover the Gorbachev visit, which ended on Thursday, but was not permitted to cover anything else.

A spokesman for ABC News said the network, which had used the main Chinese television network to broadcast nightly reports and segments of "Nightline" from Beijing, had suddenly found its scheduled air time apparently canceled. "They haven't been confirmed," said the spokesman, Scott Richardson. "We haven't had any problems with confirming time until tonight."

Network officials said they were not surprised by the move to cut them off. "Considering that Chinese television has just gone on the air and said they're going to impose martial law at the same time our portables are going down, I assume they're related," said Bill Baxter, the NBC News desk manager in the network's New York headquarters. 'It's a Zoo Here'

Nevertheless, the shutdown threw control rooms into pandemonium. "It's a zoo here," said Leon Harris, vice president for satellite at CNN's headquarters in Atlanta. CNN had permission to broadcast from China until late this afternoon. The CBS News agreement was due to expire early Sunday.

Both CNN, which continued to report by telephone, and CBS broadcast their discussions with Government officials who appeared in their hotel -room network headquarters. CBS interrupted the final season episode of "Dallas" to provide the coverage, which brought telephone complaints from some viewers.

CNN ceased transmitting after a Government official, Chou Yenjue, entered the network's control room in the Great Wall Sheraton Hotel and calmly wrote out an order on a page of yellow legal paper.

A translator read the order on the air. It said in part: "Mr. Gorbachev's China visit is over. CNN should stop its transmission immediately." After a brief disagreement about whether the order needed an official's chop, or seal, CNN accepted it and went off the air. Rather Wrangles With Officials

CBS News showed Government officials striding into its control room, inside the Shangri-La Hotel, and telling technicians to shut down their operations. Then the anchorman Dan Rather appeared.

"Can anybody here speak English?" Mr. Rather said. Then, looking at the camera, he said: "For those of you who find this hard to follow, welcome to the club."

As Mr. Rather wrangled with Chinese officials outside the hotel, several miles from Tiananmen Square, CBS News showed videotape taken minutes before that

depicted the police striking students with nightsticks. One student was shown with blood streaming down his face.

A version of this article appears in print on May 20, 1989, on Page 1001007 of the National edition with the headline: CHINA ORDERS END TO TV BROADCASTS.
