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U.S. VOICES REGRET AT EVENTS IN CHINA

By **ROBERT PEAR** and **SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES** MAY 20, 1989

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The United States expressed regret today that China had sent troops to restore order after a month of student demonstrations.

The statement, issued tonight by the State Department, came after several days in which Bush Administration officials refrained from any open expression of support for the wave of protest.

Dennis G. Harter, a State Department spokesman, said tonight: "The United States supports freedom of speech, association and peaceful assembly in China as in the rest of the world. We regret that military action has been ordered with the aim of restricting those freedoms."

He noted that the Chinese authorities had promised to continue a dialogue with the students, even as the Government was sending troops into Beijing to restore order and halt the demonstrations.

"We hope that dialogue will be pursued," Mr. Harter said. "We hope that it will address basic freedoms, such as freedom of the press, association and expression, which have been at the center of recent demonstrations." Bush Calls for Restraint In Kennebunkport, Me., where President Bush was spending the weekend, the Presidential spokesman tonight urged the Chinese authorities and students to exercise "restraint" in the face of the growing crisis there.

The spokesman, Marlin Fitzwater, read a statement saying that events in China "appear confused." But "both sides have exercised restraint," he said, and "we hope this will continue."

American officials and other experts on China said it appeared that the Communist Party leader, Zhao Ziyang, had offered to resign or had been forced out - his status was not clear - because he disagreed with the Government's decision to send troops into Beijing to deal with student protesters.

American officials said Mr. Zhao's resignation would not do much to help the regime and would probably increase anger at the Government.

The experts said China's senior leader, Deng Xiaoping, was almost certainly responsible for the Government's hard-line policy. They saw many similarities between the fate of Mr. Zhao and that of his predecessor, Hu Yaobang, who was forced to step down in January 1987 after failing to crack down on nationwide student protests.

Harry Harding, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution who has written five books about China, said: "It appears that there was a showdown and the reform faction lost. Those who were enthusiastic about far-reaching economic and political reform have lost their principal leader at the highest level of the party.

"The people emerging to power in the regime are more cautious about political and economic reform," Mr. Harding said. "They include the people responsible for the military and for public security. I would expect a tightening of political controls." Deng Seen Hanging On to Power

A State Department official said that Mr. Deng may have "decided to sacrifice Zhao in order to stay on top and guide the country through its turmoil."

The official said that Mr. Deng had been expected to step down shortly after his "crowning achievement": a meeting in Beijing this week with Mikhail S. Gorbachev, the Soviet leader, which ended 30 years of estrangement between the two giants of the Communist world. But Mr. Deng "would probably not want to step down under pressure," the official said.

Andrew B. Brick, a policy analyst in China studies at the Heritage Foundation here, said there were "marked similarities" between the removal of Mr. Hu in 1987 and the decision by Mr. Zhao to resign as head of the Communist Party.

But he said Hu Yaobang was forced to resign, whereas Zhao evidently tendered his resignation "out of disgust with the leadership."

