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UPHEAVAL IN CHINA; In Hong Kong, Too, a Throng Marches

By BARBARA BASLER and SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES MAY 22, 1989

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Huge crowds took to the streets of Hong Kong today, voicing their support of the pro-democracy campaign in Beijing with the largest demonstration in the colony's modern political history.

The government information service said the police estimate of the crowd was 400,000 to 500,000; the organizers of the protest asserted that one million people took part.

This prosperous, capitalistic British colony will be handed back to China in 1997 and the slightest political shift there is watched with apprehension here.

Today, though, Hong Kong residents apparently felt there was something they could do that might actually affect their future. A Rally at the Race Track

One of the march's big red banners with Chinese characters declared, "What happens in Beijing now will happen in Hong Kong later."

The lively, colorful procession began in the heart of the colony's sleek central business area, wound through the notorious Wanchai bar district and ended in Happy Valley, on the manicured grounds of one of the world's richest race tracks.

In Happy Valley, the huge crowds listened to students, trade unionists and legislators as they spoke out for democracy, denounced Beijing's opposition to the student protesters and called for the resignation of Prime Minister Li Peng. In

between speakers, Hong Kong movie stars and pop singers led the crowd in several patriotic songs, including "Brave Chinese," and "I Am Chinese."

The organizers had originally planned to march to the offices of the New China News Agency, China's official representative here, but the police said the area could not accommodate the huge turnout. Crowds Are Cheerful

Instead, the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club, which operates the Happy Valley race track a block away from the press agency's headquarters, allowed the demonstrators to use their site as the rallying point, even turning on the track's huge color screen so all the demonstrators could see and hear the speakers.

The crowds appeared to be cheerful, orderly and even celebratory as they began their march for democracy on a mild afternoon.

Longtime residents said not since Red Guards from China's Cultural Revolution spilled over the border into Hong Kong and incited thousands to riot in the 1960's had this normally placid, apolitical colony seen crowds even approaching the size of today's.

The Hong Kong police said they had expected only a few thousand protesters and were startled by the huge numbers of people. The Importance of Beijing

By contrast, a well-publicized rally in support of Hong Kong's fledgling democratic movement just a year ago drew a scant 500 people.

A student explained the discrepancy by saying: "No one believes that what we do in Hong Kong will matter. It is what Beijing does that matters here. And that is why people are here today." Martin Lee, a Hong Kong legislator and a leader of the colony's democratic movement, said, "If they won't listen to the wishes of their people now, they won't listen to the wishes of Hong Kong people in 1997."

There were other signs throughout the colony that people were caught up in the developments in China. Wen Wei Po, a left-wing Hong Kong newspaper generally linked to mainland policies, ran a dramatic editorial in today's issue. The editorial was only four Chinese characters, which roughly translated into, "Hurting heart, aching head."

Other residents here took out advertisements in Chinese-language papers, stating their support for the democratic movement in China. Shouts of Encouragement

Of the colony's 5.7 million residents, 98 percent are ethnic Chinese and the demonstration was overwhelmingly Chinese. Most of the banners bore big Chinese characters and the slogans and chants were in Cantonese.

The demonstrators marched in an orderly stream along several main thoroughfares, snarling traffic and halting much of the colony's trolley service. But even people stranded in traffic or marooned on trolleys greeted the demonstrators with waves and shouts of encouragement.

On Monday, however, it will be business as usual, and stock market analysts are predicting that the unsettling events in China will severely shake investors' confidence here. On Friday, the market's Hang Seng index fell 132 points, the largest drop since the worldwide market crash in October 1987.

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