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## BEIJING RESIDENTS BLOCK ARMY MOVE NEAR CITY CENTER

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Tens of thousands of Beijing students and workers surged onto the streets early this morning to turn back more than 2,000 troops who were marching toward Tiananmen Square.

It was the biggest outpouring of citizen support for the demonstrating students in more than a week, and it seemed possible that it would rekindle the student movement and present a new challenge to the Government.

The confrontation underscored the fragile and volatile nature of the situation in Beijing just when the turmoil here seemed to be subsiding after seven weeks of demonstrations by students and workers for democracy and against corruption.

[ The Associated Press, in a report from Beijing today, said about 800 riot police officers fired tear gas to clear an area outside the Communist Party headquarters, just west of the square. Witnesses reported at least 30 people outside the Beijing Hotel were beaten by the police, who were said to be armed with truncheons and knives, the A.P. said. ] Residents Block the Troops

Students and local residents were convinced that the army troops planned to clear Tiananmen Square, which students have occupied for three weeks. All along Changan Avenue, the main east-west thoroughfare, local residents emerged in the pre-dawn hours to block nearby intersections and prevent troops from passing,

after more than a week in which the streets were clear of such roadblocks. It seemed possible that the confrontation was simply the result of a misunderstanding after an earlier incident: a traffic accident on Friday night in which a police van hit four bicyclists, killing at least two people and seriously injuring the others.

A Chinese witness said the police van was traveling fast on Changan Avenue when it hit the bicyclists and then rolled over. The word quickly spread that the police had run down and killed four citizens. Because the police van had been heading in the direction of Tiananmen Square, citizens darkly suggested it was playing a role in the repression of students. Accident Galvanizes Students

The accident quickly galvanized university students to mobilize and parade through the streets, demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Li Peng. The students occupying Tiananmen Square also broadcast the news of the accident over their loudspeaker system, and knots of people began to form at every intersection to discuss the accident.

It was at this juncture that the soldiers arrived on Changan Avenue. While other soldiers have marched by the area in the last two days, apparently in a show of force, this time tensions were already high and many people were out on the street. Word spread that the soldiers planned to seize the students, and citizens rushed out of their homes to block the troops. Soldiers Appear Unenthusiastic

The soldiers, most of them wearing white undershirts with their khaki uniform pants, looked distinctly unenthusiastic about their mission. Most seemed to be peasants from distant areas, and a few began crying when their way was blocked by local residents.

Students displayed sticks that they said some of the soldiers had carried, but most of the troops seemed to be carrying only canteens and backpacks. Most refused to talk to foreigners, but one said they had not been told why they were sent to the Tiananmen area.

While there was some pushing and shoving when the citizens stopped the troops, just a few hundred yards from the square, there was no fighting and no apparent serious injury.

Later, the troops seemed to have no idea where to go. They sat down along the side of the road and listened as students and workers surrounded them and tried to persuade them not to attack students.

"You are the people's army," a young worker earnestly told several soldiers.

"The students' movement is patriotic, and you mustn't use violence against it. Think about it." Reality vs. Perception

Smaller numbers of troops were seen in other parts of the city, and some students said they had information that a major military assault on Tiananmen Square had been planned for the early morning, but had been foiled by the watchfulness of local citizens.

Whatever the reality, the perception is that in one night the Government has run down and killed four bicyclists and tried to use troops to seize the students on Tiananmen Square.

The unrest began shortly after the death on April 15 of the former Communist Party leader, Hu Yaobang, and gained a great deal of momentum during a hunger strike beginning three weeks ago by 3,000 students. More than a million Beijing residents took to the streets to support the hunger strikers in their demands for a more democratic government, and demonstrations were reported all over China.

The demonstrations also provoked a political crisis, after the party leader, Zhao Ziyang, urged a more conciliatory approach than other top officials were willing to undertake. This precipitated a power struggle that has enveloped the leadership for two weeks, and that seems likely to end with the dismissal of Mr. Zhao. New Protest Is Planned

Further unrest might help Mr. Zhao, however, by discrediting the hard-line approach of his rival, Prime Minister Li Peng. It was Mr. Li who called troops into the capital early in the morning of May 20 to effect a military crackdown on the democracy movement.

"We'll have a massive demonstration tomorrow," said a construction worker who helped block the troops. "We'll probably go on strike, too. We can't let the troops attack the patriotic student movement."

Local residents stopped every police and military truck they could find along Changan Avenue. They barricaded the vehicles and let the air out of their tires. Some also drove trucks across the avenue to create roadblocks.

Thousands of students and local residents also gathered at the site of the car accident, but the police left the scene and there were no conflicts. 100,000 Attend a Rally

The number of students occupying the square is down to a few thousand from the tens of thousands who camped there just a week ago. But on Friday evening, more than 100,000 people had gathered in Tiananmen Square to listen to a pop

singer, Hou Dejian, who began a 48-hour hunger strike in support of the students. Mr. Hou was joined by two young scholars and an officer of a major computer company who were planning a 72-hour fast.

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