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CRACKDOWN IN BEIJING: Reporter's Notebook; 'Please, Tell the World,' Students Beg

By NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF and SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES JUNE 4, 1989

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The violence against students and workers in Tiananmen Square was most obvious today, because for the most part they were the ones getting killed. But they, too, were violent against the police and army troops, although less effectively so.

Clutching iron bars and bricks, the students glared at soldiers 100 yards away on the other side of the square. It was dark, although the fire from an armed personnel carrier that students had set ablaze cast an eerie glow over part of the square, and the troops and their rows of vehicles could be dimly discerned in the haze.

From time to time, a group of them would advance on the soldiers to throw rocks and otherwise harass them. And then often, they would be shot and killed. It was an unequal competition.

Whenever the students got their chance, spotting an unarmed group of soldiers, they attacked with bricks and iron bars. However, the soldiers, most of whom had guns, tended to stick together.

Until now, students had emphasized the need for nonviolent tactics, and today some still begged their friends to put down their bricks and iron bars. But many students seemed to have crossed their personal Rubicon today, and those who

previously had clutched leaflets and megaphones today picked up firebombs. 'Our Government Is Mad'

To be an American on the square this morning was to be the object of fervent hope and inarticulate pleas for help.

"We appeal to your country," a university student begged as bullets careened overhead. "Our Government is mad. We need help from abroad, especially America. There must be something that America can do."

Enraged and desperate as they saw their friends fall and crimson stains grow on their chests, students and workers rushed to any foreigner they could find to express such appeals for help. Almost nobody had any idea what the United States could do, and perhaps it was more a cry of outrage than a plea for help. But this sometimes wordless craving for an international response seemed almost universal on Tiananmen Square.

It was not that students wanted or expected foreign forces to actively intervene. Rather, it seemed to be a moral judgment that they sought, and especially the hope that the news of the bloodshed would reach the outside world and not be covered up.

Most were convinced that the Chinese authorities would never report an accurate toll of the dead and wounded, nor explain what had truly happened in the capital. The morning news programs seemed to justify their skepticism: a brief report said little more than that soldiers had successfully crushed a "counterrevolutionary rebellion."

Denied recognition at home, it became all the more important that the blood and sorrow and bitterness somehow find expression abroad. Even if it did not reverberate back home, students said, at least it could give some meaning to the sacrifices. And so they sought out foreign journalists, tugging them toward the corpses, showing them the blood on the pavement, and begging them to write about what had happened.

"You must tell the world what is happening," a long-haired university student urged, nearly incoherent with fury, "because otherwise all this counts for nothing."

Many asked that their appeals be transmitted to the United Nations, although none had a clear idea of what the United Nations could possibly do to help.

"Maybe it can discuss this situation," a student said impatiently. "Anyway, we have to do something." Diplomats Wary

While reassurances to the rest of the world that China welcomes foreign

tourists and investment presumably remain a consideration, such matters seemed to take a back seat in this morning's military crackdown.

The diplomatic quarter in Beijing was roused from slumber this morning by the almost deafening rumble of seven armed personnel carriers rolling by on the way to Tiananmen Square. Then, truckloads of soldiers arrived and, directly in front of the Jianguomenwai diplomatic compound where many diplomats live, began firing their submachine guns in the air.

In front of the Friendship Store, where tourists go to buy souvenirs, students and workers had turned over an army van and set it ablaze. In the Sanlitun diplomatic compound to the north, opponents of the Government expressed their outrage by setting a police station on fire.

In the lobby of the Beijing Hotel, undercover police officers searched photographers for film they had taken of the clashes, and one photographer was beaten when he refused to hand it over.

While there were no direct attacks on foreigners, there seemed to be a hostility in the air from the Government toward Western influences that had helped the democracy movement. Student demonstrators may appeal to Americans for help, but the Government is suggesting that Americans keep their distance.

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