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CRACKDOWN IN BEIJING; The Beijing Spring: From Heady Defiance to Repression

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Demonstrations by students and workers demanding greater democracy and an end to Government corruption went on for more than six weeks in Beijing's central Tiananmen Square before the authorities resorted to armed force to suppress them. Here are the high points of the sustained protest, which has come to be regarded as a turning point for China:

April 18: Several thousand students march through the capital in predawn hours, chanting democratic slogans, singing revolutionary songs and mourning the ousted Communist Party leader, Hu Yaobang, who died April 15.

April 22: Defying a ban on public protests, more than 100,000 gather in Tiananmen Square to press demands for more democracy. Tens of thousands of university students begin camping all night in the square, foiling Government plans to close off the area.

April 29: Waving banners commemorating a similar demonstration 70 years earlier, protesters march through the streets of the capital demanding greater press freedom and more democracy. The march follows the Government's rejection of the students' conditions for formal talks to resolve their differences. Demonstrations are also held in Shanghai, Nanjing and other cities.

May 13: About 2,000 students begin a hunger strike at Tiananmen Square.

May 14: An unannounced Politburo meeting reportedly endorses the moderate line of the Communist Party leader, Zhao Ziyang, including more discussions with the students and limited steps toward greater democracy.

May 15: Mikhail S. Gorbachev arrives in Beijing to seal the reconciliation of the two Communist nations. Hunger strikers camped out in the square refuse to end their vigil, forcing the authorities to move their welcoming ceremony for the Soviet leader to the airport.

May 19: Prime Minister Li Peng warns that chaos in Beijing is spreading all over the country. The Government capitulates on a key student demand by arranging a nationally televised meeting between Mr. Li and leaders of the protest. "We've come too late," a tearful Mr. Zhao says at the meeting. "You have good intentions. You want our country to become better. The problems you have raised will eventually be resolved."

May 20: Troops are called into the capital and martial law is imposed in parts of the city as the Government attempts crack down. "We must adopt firm and resolute measures to end the turmoil swiftly," Prime Minister Li says. Tens of thousands of people rush out of their homes blocking troops from reaching demonstrators in the central square. Later in the day, about one million Chinese take to the streets to defy martial law.

Reports circulate that Zhao Ziyang has been stripped of all power, retaining only his title of General Secretary of the party.

May 25: Mr. Li declares that his Government is in control and sends a letter to troops encircling Beijing, expressing the hope that "the troops will overcome the difficulties confronting them" and "successfully impose martial law."

May 27: Some student leaders call for an end to their occupation of Tiananmen Square, but say they will continue to hold large-scale demonstrations to press for greater democracy and the resignation of Prime Minister Li.

June 2: Unarmed troops try to march on the square but are driven back by thousands of citizens.

June 3: A violent confrontation begins as troops again march on square, beating dozens of protesters before retreating.

June 4: Troops and tanks return to the square, opening fire on throngs and destroying barricades.

