

# TURMOIL IN CHINA; FOREBODING GRASPS BEIJING; ARMY UNITS CRISSCROSS CITY; FOREIGNERS HURRY TO LEAVE

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As reports of clashes between military units on the outskirts of Beijing continued, a major convoy of tanks and trucks returned to the capital early today, dashing hopes that the unit responsible for large-scale killing might be withdrawing.

On Wednesday, three tank-led convoys headed out of the city toward the east. All were assumed to belong to the 27th Army, the unit most responsible for the killing of hundreds or possibly thousands of protesters and bystanders here since Sunday. Clashes were then reported in Tongxian County, about 20 miles east of Beijing, but like most such reports they could not be confirmed.

The crisscrossing of the capital by nervous military units compounded the sense of urgency at foreign embassies. The United States and other countries ordered an evacuation of diplomats' families, and some embassies said they would also be sending staff members home. **Firing at Diplomatic Compounds**

The evacuation decision came after Chinese troops on Wednesday fired into two diplomatic compounds that house thousands of foreign diplomats and journalists. No one was reported wounded, but windows were shattered at many apartments on the outside of the compound. One American diplomat found 50 bullet holes in his apartment.

Grim-looking troops armed with submachine guns later surrounded the Jianguomenwai compound, closed the gates and refused to allow anyone in or out. After two hours, the troops left and the United States Embassy sent its Marine guards to help evacuate Americans who wanted to leave.

American diplomats will remain in Beijing and the embassy will remain open, but the diplomats have moved to nearby hotels. The security moves reflect widespread fears that large-scale fighting could break out here between rival military units supporting different political leaders. Meetings May Be Under Way

Some diplomats say high-level meetings may be under way among different factions to try to resolve the military crisis and the paralysis in the city, and there were reports on Wednesday that some senior officials arrived at Beijing's old airport to travel under military protection to the center of the city, possibly for a meeting. But no one knew who the officials were or what kind of a meeting it was.

Everything about China is tinged with the surreal these days, even the troop movements.

"Down with chaos!" several thousand troops shouted in unison on Wednesday as they marched east along the Avenue of Eternal Peace, accompanied by scores of military vehicles. "Down with corruption! Fight the counterrevolutionaries! Fight the fascists!"

And then, fueling the chaos around them, the troops simultaneously began firing their submachine guns into the air, creating a deafening thunder that lasted several minutes and sent people diving to the ground. It was not clear if they were firing as a show of strength, to clear the streets of spectators, or for some other reason. Soldiers Everywhere

While the troops were not so quick to shoot at pedestrians as they were a few days ago, soldiers were still everywhere on the main arteries in Beijing. They were reluctant to drive alone, away from the main roads, but tanks and troop trucks often paraded around the rubble on the Avenue of Eternal Peace and other thoroughfares.

This morning, shortly before dawn, tanks escorted scores of troop trucks west along the Avenue of Eternal Peace toward Tiananmen Square, the clatter of tank treads softened slightly by a gentle rain. It was no clearer why the convoy was now heading west than why it had gone east the previous day.

It was similarly unclear who, if anyone, is running China. The country's pre-eminent leader, Deng Xiaoping, was last seen on May 16, and there were rumors

that he is dead or dying. But the morning news programs and the Communist Party newspaper, People's Daily, which reappeared for the first time in several days, reported that Prime Minister Li Peng had held a meeting, suggesting that he still is in authority.

People's Daily and morning radio programs on Wednesday also seemed to suggest that Qiao Shi (pronounced chow shur), a Politburo member in charge of security, might be gaining influence and could be named Communist Party leader. But the item was not reported in the evening television news program. U.S. Is Criticized

In a sign that the unrest in Beijing is straining Chinese-American relations, the Government on Wednesday twice attacked the United States for interfering in China's affairs. The principal sore point appeared to be President Bush's decision to protest the killing of civilians by suspending arms sales to China and suspending visits by military officials between the two countries.

It said the United States "has flagrantly made unwarranted charges against China over a matter that is purely China's internal affair and has taken unilateral actions to the detriment of bilateral relations, exerting pressure on the Chinese Government."

"This is absolutely unacceptable to us," the statement said, adding that the United States should do nothing to hurt relations.

Later in the day, the Government issued a statement attacking the decision to give refuge in the American Embassy to Fang Lizhi, the astrophysicist, who is China's best-known dissident.

"The refuge provided to Fang by the U.S. Embassy in Beijing is an interference in China's internal affairs," read the statement, issued by the official New China News Agency. Some Firing Continues

Troops continued to fire on unarmed civilians in some areas, but casualties were few. Two people were killed and 17 wounded on Wednesday when soldiers opened fire on a crowd near the Beijing train station, and there were reports of attacks on civilians in other parts of the city.

But for the most part, the attacks by troops on civilians, which killed hundreds and perhaps thousands of people after the army moved into the center of the city early Sunday, seem to have been replaced by skirmishes between military units and a dull apprehension throughout the capital that the worst may be yet to come.

The situation is so confusing that these days almost no one professes to know

what is going on, least of all the ordinary Chinese residents who slip out of their homes to chat with neighbors about the latest rumors.

On Tuesday, residents in the western part of the city cheered convoys of troops who said they were members of the 38th Army, widely believed to be planning attacks against the forces in the 27th Army, the one responsible for most of the bloodshed. The citizens even dismantled some of their barricades on the Avenue of Eternal Peace, so that the 38th Army vehicles could proceed more rapidly to the center of the city and attack the 27th. 'Can't Figure It Out

But after the purported 38th Army troops passed into the center of the city, they disappeared and no one knows what happened to them. Now, many citizens believe that they were duped and the troops were only pretending to be in the 38th Army so as to get help in dismantling the barricades. Next time, residents vow, they will demand proof before allowing soldiers to pass by so easily.

Everyone regards the troop movements eastward on Wednesday as very significant, but no one knows in what way.

"I can't figure out what is happening," an Asian diplomat in Beijing said. "There are two possibilities: One is that the troops are retreating from the city. The second is that they are taking forward positions in preparation for an attack against them."

The two possibilities lead to different outcomes, in terms of the security situation in Beijing, but for now it is impossible to tell which scenario is correct.

The return of at least one of the convoys this morning added to the murkiness of the situation, but seemed to diminish the possibility that they were retreating from Beijing. Square Strewn With Rubbish

The evening television news program Wednesday showed the first scenes of Tiananmen Square since troops seized the area early Sunday morning. The square was strewn with rubbish and the burned-out remains of the encampment of the students who occupied the square until they were forced out by the soldiers.

The square has been sealed off by troops since then, and they have tended to fire periodically at those approaching the area, so it has been difficult to know what has been happening there.

The announcer said that no students were killed on the square Sunday morning, and although it is now accepted wisdom among many Chinese that thousands of students were mowed down on the center of the square by machine-gun fire, the statement may be correct in a technical sense.

Troops fired machine guns randomly at crowds on the north side of the square and along the Avenue of Eternal Peace in both directions, killing many people. But both students and foreign journalists who were at the encampment in the center of the square say they were not shot and were allowed to leave peacefully shortly after dawn. There may have been some students still in their tents who were run over by the tanks that destroyed the encampment, but witnesses agree that they saw none of the people in the center of the square shot that morning. Extraordinary Pictures on TV

State-run television has continued to show extraordinary pictures of students and workers disabling army trucks and armored personnel carriers. The videos were apparently taken by secret police officers from rooftops and by electronic monitors that are set up on many of the capital's main streets.

"From this you can see the seriousness of the chaos that the counterrevolutionaries have created," the announcer said as the television showed a crowd of young men burning a line of armored personnel carriers.

One of the scenes broadcast Wednesday showed a dozen young men taking an armored personnel carrier that they had captured on a joy ride. The driver was not very expert, and as a small crowd clung to the top and sides of the carrier, it lurched around and seemed about ready to run into other vehicles. Announcers Back on Camera

Official news organizations took a small step toward normality Wednesday, when announcers again appeared on camera on the television news program. On Tuesday, the announcers were not shown while the news was read. Although People's Daily reappeared, most subscribers are still not receiving any newspapers or other mail.

The main Beijing airport and several nearby hotels are jammed as Westerners try to flee the city. Most foreign students are returning to their home countries, along with business representatives and diplomatic families. Some countries, not including the United States, are also cutting back on their diplomatic staffs.

The event that precipitated most of the concern among foreign residents was the shooting incident in the Qijiayuan and Jianguomenwai diplomatic compounds Wednesday morning. Many of the apartments had already been evacuated, because soldiers had been firing into the air nearby for two days.

Adding to the alarm, there were widespread reports that soldiers had forced their way into several diplomats' apartments and terrorized the occupants while

demolishing their belongings. But for all the rumors, the report could not be verified and seems not to be true, although soldiers may have entered two apartments to look for a sniper whom they said had been shooting at them. A Soldier Is Reported Killed

The Government issued a special statement Wednesday night explaining the incident. It said that one soldier had been killed and three others wounded when troops were attacked by snipers from the Jianguomenwai compound and from a building opposite it.

"The contingent was forced to fire back," the statement said. It added that the troops would be responsible for protecting the safety of both Chinese and foreigners who strictly observe martial-law regulations.

The United States Ambassador, James R. Lilley, raised the issue with high-level officials in the Foreign Ministry on Wednesday, an embassy spokesman said, but he added that he had no further information on the discussions or any indication of whether the Ambassador was satisfied with them.

The meeting at least suggested that the Foreign Ministry is functioning and that high-level officials are doing some work. It was not clear if this is also true in other ministries or in the Communist Party, but there was a widespread suspicion that the nation's leadership and administration are mostly paralyzed these days.

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