

Beijing Hints at Crackdown on Students

By NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF and SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES APRIL 26, 1989

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In its strongest public comment so far on the pro-democracy student demonstrations of the last 10 days, the Communist Party called tonight for "a grave political struggle" against student unrest.

The harshness of the message, which charged that the unrest was a conspiracy to wrest power from the party, immediately prompted fears among students that a crackdown was imminent. Similar wording was used in warnings that accompanied crackdowns against unrest in 1987 and in 1976.

Students at two prominent Beijing universities rallied tonight and vowed to continue their class boycotts, but some students seemed ready to back away from more aggressive tactics.

The party announcement was read over the evening television news as the first item, and also released by the official New China News Agency. The statement was based on the partial contents of an editorial to be published Wednesday in People's Daily, the official newspaper of the Communist Party Central Committee. The Party Statement

"All the comrades of the party and the whole nation must understand clearly," a solemn television newscaster announced, "that if we do not resolutely stop this unrest, our state will have no calm days. Our reform and modernization will

depend on this struggle, and the future of our state and nation will depend on it." The student demonstrations began shortly after the death April 15 of the former Communist Party leader, Hu Yaobang, who had been forced to resign two years ago after an earlier round of student demonstrations.

At their peak late last week, the demonstrations in the center of Beijing attracted more than 100,000 people mourning Mr. Hu and urging greater democracy. The protesters called for press freedom, the right to demonstrate, punishment of corrupt officials and a reappraisal of Mr. Hu.

Since Mr. Hu's funeral ceremony on Saturday, the democracy campaign has entered a quieter phase. More than 1,000 students from the Beijing Institute of Technology marched through the capital today, waving such banners as "Democracy Forever," but in general students have focused their energies on writing posters and organizing an indefinite class boycott that seems to be enjoying overwhelming support at universities throughout the capital. 'Poison People's Minds'

The longer, televised version of tonight's statement said that the party initially had been tolerant, but that after the funeral service: "A very small number of people with ulterior motives continue to make use of the desire of young students to mourn Comrade Hu Yaobang.

"They fabricate various rumors to poison people's minds. They make use of posters to libel and slander and attack the leaders of the Communist Party and the Government. They even undisguisedly violate the Constitution, incite people to negate the party's leadership and the socialist system. In some universities, they have set up illegal organizations and taken power from official student associations. In some universities, they have seized school broadcasting systems and incited students and teachers to boycott class."

Several thousand students gathered tonight at Beijing University to discuss strategy after the announcement. The mood was angry.

"We must persist to the end and the victory will be ours," one woman said over the public address system.

A science student said: "The mood is very, very defiant. I think people are all going to stick together and fight for it."

Beijing University student leaders said tonight that they were still planning to continue their student strike, and planned to hold "large-scale activities" on May 1 and May 4, to commemorate the anniversary of famous student demonstrations

that took place on May 4, 1919.

Students at Qinghua University nearby seemed somewhat more shaken by the announcement. Several thousand Qinghua students gathered tonight on the campus to discuss the situation, and decided that while they would continue their class boycott, they would not give the Government any pretext to intervene.

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