

May 18, 1989

**China Division [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan],
'Chinese Student Actions (Hunger Strike)'**

Citation:

"China Division [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan], 'Chinese Student Actions (Hunger Strike)'", May 18, 1989, Wilson Center Digital Archive, 2020-0545, Act on Access to Information Held by Administrative Organs, published online by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Translated by Stephen Mercado.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/300589>

Summary:

The China Division provides an update on the student protests in China, commenting that "there is emotional support for the student demands" among the broad masses. The report also evaluates how the Chinese leadership is handling the protest movement.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

Original Language:

Japanese

Contents:

Original Scan
Translation - English

秘 無 期 限

中国の学生の動き（ハンガー・ストライキ）

平成元. 5. 18.

中 国 課

1. 現状

ゴルバチョフ訪中の機会にあわせ13日より天安門前で続けられているハンガー・ストライキは、17日夜、ここ1カ月以来最大規模（100万人）の知識人、一般市民の支援デモ、集会に発展。地方にも波及。指導者名指し批判も。

他方、当局側は学生との「対話」（14、15日）、趙紫陽の書面談話（17日）により説得を試みるも効を奏さず。この間、「ゴ」の日程の一部変更（中止、場所変更等）を強いられる事態も発生。（18日朝、趙紫陽、李鵬等、学生を病院に見舞う）

2. 学生の動きが幅広い支持を得、拡大した背景

- (1) 特権階級に見られる腐敗、汚職への反対等学生の要求への心情的支持。（一般市民の現状への不満の大きさを示す）
- (2) インフレに苦しむ都市住民の不満。
- (3) 「民主」、「自由」に対する一般市民の理解度が進み、学生を支持。
- (4) ハンガー・ストライキという非暴力的な方法に対する同情。
- (5) 「皆も行くから」という群衆心理。（子供連れ、笑顔も見られた）

3. 当局が強硬手段をとっていない背景

- (1) ゴルバチョフ訪中中であり、1000名近い外国プレスが北京に集中。
- (2) 一般市民の幅広い支持を得ているため強硬手段を採り難い。
- (3) 学生の要求が現行の施策と一致。（腐敗、汚職反対、民主化）

4. 見通し

- (1) 短期的：「ゴ」の帰国後、当局側は、学生の要求に対し一部具体的譲歩を行い、運動は暫時収束。
- (2) 長期的：学生の要求は突き詰めれば「民主」、「自由」であり、これの政策面での実現は時間を要するので、今後もなんらかのキツカケにより再発。
- (3) 指導部人事への波及

今回の事態の背景には鄧小平の長期“独裁”に対する一般大衆の反感が相当根強く存在するとみられる。鄧が中ソ首脳会談後引退するとの噂が従来よりあるが、今次学生の動きが直接引き金になることはないにしても、鄧引退を早める要因になる可能性あり。

他方、趙紫陽は鄧小平と学生の板ばさみという困難な立場で取捨に苦勞しているものと見られるが、慎重に集団指導体制を踏まえ学生には柔軟な対応を示していることから、趙批判に発展することはないと思われる。

Confidential

Indefinite Duration

Chinese Student Actions (Hunger Strike)

May 18, 1989

China Division

1. Present Situation

The hunger strike, which has been held in front of Tiananmen Square since the 13th to coincide with Gorbachev's visit to China, developed on the evening of the 17th into the largest gathering (one million persons) in the past month of intellectuals and ordinary city residents demonstrating their support. It has also spread to the provinces. There has also been criticism of leaders by their names.

On the other hand, the authorities attempted but failed to persuade the students by "dialogue" (14th and 15th) and Zhao Ziyang's written statement (17th). During this time, they were forced to make some changes (cancellations, changes in venue) to Gorbachev's schedule. (In the morning of the 18th, Zhao Ziyang and Li Peng, among others, visited students in the hospital.)

2. Behind the Broad and Expanded Support for the Student Actions

(1) There is emotional support for the student demands in opposition to the corruption and graft seen among the privileged class (an expression of the extent of the average citizen's discontent with the present situation).

(2) There is the discontent of urban residents suffering from inflation.

(3) As average citizens come to understand "democracy" and "freedom," they support the students.

(4) There is sympathy in regard to the non-violent method of the hunger strike.

(5) There is a crowd psychology of "everyone's going there." (People have been seen taking their children with them and smiling.)

3. Behind the Authorities Not Taking Hard-Line Measures

(1) Gorbachev is visiting China; close to a thousand members of the foreign press are gathered in Beijing.

(2) The students have gained widespread support from average city residents, so adopting hardline measures would be difficult.

(3) Student demands are consistent with present policy (opposition to corruption and graft, democratization).

4. Prospects

(1) In the short term: After Gorbachev returns to the Soviet Union, the authorities will conduct some specific negotiations in regard to student demands. The student movement will settle down for a little while.

(2) In the long term: Student demands are, in the final analysis, for "democracy" and "freedom." Realizing them in terms of policy would take time, so the student movement will start again on some occasion or another.

(3) Effects on the Leadership

There is a view that behind the present situation there exists considerably strong popular resentment in regard to Deng Xiaoping's long "dictatorship." There was already the rumor that Deng would retire after the Chinese-Soviet summit. Even if the present student actions do not directly serve as the trigger, there exists the possibility of their becoming a factor hastening Deng's retirement.

On the other hand, there is the view that Zhao Ziyang is having a hard time of it in a difficult position, caught between Deng Xiaoping and the students. Because he is carefully showing a flexible response to the students on the basis of the collective leadership system, however, the impression is that it will not develop into a criticism of Zhao.