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# 10,000 go on the march for democracy

By Ma Miu-wah

THE collapse of communism in Romania was seen yesterday as the spark for the biggest pro-democracy demonstration in Hongkong since the summer.

About 10,000 Hongkong people yesterday took to the streets, chanting, "Down with the Chinese Ceausescu(s)".

They turned out in support of a mass demonstration organised by the Hongkong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements in China, which Beijing has branded as subversive.

Wanchai police District Commander Mr Michael Prew estimated the crowd at between 8,000 and 10,000 while the alliance put the figure at 15,000.

The high turnout - the biggest since July - and the strong emotion of the demonstrators signalled a renewed enthusiasm among local people for the democracy movement.

Alliance chairman Mr Szeto Wah attributed the success of the demonstration to the encouraging signs from the Eastern bloc, and especially to the people's victory in Romania.

Describing the turnout as encouraging, Mr Szeto said: "I think the changes in Eastern European countries have brought along fresh impetus.

"The events that have taken place in Romania contributed most.

"The Romanian incident is of exactly the same nature as China's

Tiananmen Square incident - except that they had a very different ending," said Mr Szeto.

China had constantly sent intimidating warnings about the alliance's activities, threatening that the group was likely to be disbanded after 1997.

But Mr Szeto yesterday vowed that the alliance would work unceasingly until democracy was installed in China.

Yesterday's demonstration - "Democracy '89 into the 90s" - was the alliance's follow-up to a midnight candlelight rally on New Year's Eve in Chater Garden.

The demonstration began with a short rally early yesterday afternoon in Chater Garden.

Demonstrators chanted "Down with the Chinese Ceausescu(s)" and "Down with Deng, Li, Yang" (paramount leader Mr Deng Xiaoping, Premier Li Peng and State President Yang Shangkun).

Democracy activists hold them responsible for using tanks and weapons to put down the pro-democracy protests on June 4.

Many demonstrators brought their own placards and banners.

Among them were flags resembling China's national flag - except that the red was black and the star symbolising the Chinese Communist Party

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## Emotions high at protest march

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During the protests in Romania, demonstrators removed the communist symbol from their national flag.

The procession moved through Central and Wan Chai and after 45 minutes reached the office of Xinhua News Agency, China's de facto consulate in Hongkong.

As the march reached the Xinhua office, emotions reached fever pitch, demonstrators yelling slogans calling for democracy in China and the release of arrested Chinese and Hongkong dissidents.

Some demonstrators shouted: "Down with the Communist Party."

But their cry was drowned out by the microphone-equipped demonstration leaders who, it is believed, did not agree with the call.

The demonstration broke up shortly afterwards.

Many enthusiastic supporters sought to get autographs from alliance leaders.