

5 June 1980

100,000 attend memorial vigil

By ANDY HO
and BELLETTE LEE

MORE than 100,000 people packed the football pitches at Victoria Park last night in a moving candlelight vigil commemorating the first anniversary of the June 4 bloody suppression of the Chinese pro-democracy movement.

The park became a glittering spectacle as mourners sat in silence holding white candles.

The organisers had applied to use the park's six concrete football pitches, but they were filled to capacity even before the rally started at 7.30 pm.

The police later agreed to open the nearby grass field and cricket pitch to accommodate the swelling number of participants.

Showers which started about 10 pm failed to dampen the enthusiasm of the mourners, most of whom stayed and heeded the organisers' call not to raise umbrellas lest they block others' view.

The Alliance in Support of the Patriotic Democratic Movement in China which organised the observance claimed a turnout of more than 150,000. The police put their estimate in the region of 100,000.

The MTR provided special trains to ease traffic when the unexpectedly large

crowd dispersed after the three-hour vigil.

In his opening speech, the chairman of the Alliance, Mr Szeto Wah, said: "The most beloved compatriots: Your sacrifice has shown people's hearts are not dead and the country is hopeful. Please rest in peace."

He likened the Chinese officials responsible for the military crackdown to beasts which had raped the motherland.

Mr Szeto also hailed the Beijing University students' demonstration early yesterday as an act of courage.

Another Alliance leader, film director John Shum Kin-fun, told the crowd that suggestions that they should not rock the boat by provoking China were tantamount to an insult to the Tiananmen Square victims.

"Hongkong people have long been denounced as money-minded. Hongkong people have long been condemned as unpatriotic for their mass emigration. But when we stand up to tell the world we care, they ask us to shut up," Shum said.

"If our house is run by a lousy caretaker, who is not even elected by us, we have the right to have them dismissed."

In a video-taped message, the chairman of the Federation of a Democratic

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China, Mr Yan Jiaqi, said he was glad that the territory had come up with its first liberal political party — the United Democrats of Hongkong.

"There will be no democracy, if there are no different political parties competing with each other. The formation of the political party is a great victory of Hongkong people," said Mr Yan.

Mr Yan also called on the new director of the New China News Agency in Hongkong, Mr Zhou Nan, to side with the people.

Similar taped messages of solidarity were made by Chinese student leader, Mr Wuer'kaixi, and liberal writer Liu Bingyan.

Alliance vice-chairman, Mr Martin Lee Chu-ming, delivered a closing speech in Cantonese, which resembled the famous "I have a dream" speech of the late black human rights activist, the Reverend Martin Luther King.

Mr Lee said: "I have a dream. I dream that in the June 4s to come, newspapers with diverging political

views could be circulated freely in China.

"I dream of Chang'an Avenue in Beijing packed with ballot stations instead of tanks. I dream of a billion Chinese being able to exercise their free votes."

He told the crowd these dreams would eventually come true as long as they persisted in the struggle for democracy.

Mr Lee then set fire to a book containing the signatures of 133,483 mourners.

The Alliance leaders led the demonstrators to sing several patriotic songs before the trouble-free vigil ended at 10.15 pm.

Earlier, about 3,000 Christians marched in silence from Chater Garden to Victoria Park to join the candlelight vigil.

Wearing yellow T-shirts and white head bands, their procession passed through the NCNA headquarters in Wan Chai without stopping.

Unlike other demonstrations, the group did not sing or chant slogans during the hour-long march. The parade was led by a hearse broadcasting sombre music.