

May 15, 1989

**Notepad of Teimuraz Stepanov-Mamaladze, 15 May
1989**

Citation:

"Notepad of Teimuraz Stepanov-Mamaladze, 15 May 1989", May 15, 1989, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Hoover Institution Archive, Teimuraz Stepanov-Mamaladze Papers: Notepad 15.05.1989. Translated by Sergey Radchenko.
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/119285>

Summary:

Teimuraz Stepanov-Mamaladze notes covering a discussion between Gorbachev and Yang Shangkun, during the beginning of the Soviet visit to China. Gorbachev and Shangkun compare economic growth rates and initiatives in China and the Soviet Union, and Gorbachev talks about perestroika. Later in the day, Gorbachev explains his impressions that the Chinese are interested in normalizing relations with the Soviet Union, and are worried about the protests occurring in Tiananmen Square. The Soviet delegation connects their visit to China to the protests.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from MacArthur Foundation

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

15 May 1989

The beginning of the visit

Meeting with Yang Shangkun, Chairman of the PRC

M.S. [Gorbachev]: You made a correct observation that it is good that this period has come to an end. Time flies fast.

Y[ang Shangkun]: Let us act in accordance with what comrade Deng Xiaoping said, close the past, open the future.

[Gorbachev]: This visit will have the significance of a [new] stage. We will make step after step without undue noise.

against the background of pearl-encrusted cranes

M.S. [Gorbachev] invited Yang Shangkun to visit the Soviet Union.

[Yang Shangkun]: I gladly accept your proposal.

[Gorbachev]: Don't take an interpreter with you.

[Yang Shangkun]: I may have difficulties.

[Gorbachev]: We are now on the eve of the Congress of [People's] Deputies. We will be interested in your experience.

[Yang Shangkun]: I left the Soviet Union in [19]31.

[Gorbachev]: The year of my birth.

[Yang Shangkun]: I spent three years there. The Soviet Union is a great country, and I did not have the chance to visit everywhere. In Moscow, in different Soviet [sentence incomplete].

[Gorbachev]: I also remember different meetings. But all of this is in the past. Irkutsk [sic].

[Yang Shangkun]: Our peoples kept a long and good friendship.

[Gorbachev]: And we, politicians, must express it.

[Yang Shangkun]: In the course of the conduct of reforms and the government policy, the [country's] GNP doubled. We are far behind you.

[Gorbachev]: But you have faster growth rates than we do.

[Yang Shangkun]: We even have to slow the pace.

[Gorbachev]: Similar processes. From this point of view, it is very important to inform

each other.

[Yang Shangkun]: As for perestroika, we see your decisiveness.

[Gorbachev]: There is no alternative to perestroika. No one offered [any] during the four years of perestroika. We approach the truth gradually, step by step, not thinking that we are the last authority, which has possession of it. We used to think one could do that [i.e. monopolize the truth].

[Yang Shangkun]: There is no such ready scheme, ready model...

[Gorbachev]: In our [country,] they write a lot about the Chinese modernization. And that with such admiration that you would have never dreamed of. By the way, not only the Foreign Minister [Eduard Shevardnadze] has come to China for the second time but my [underlined in the original] Chairman of the State Planning Committee has come for the second [time], my health minister, a big-time scientist. The Soviet Union has a shortage of medicine so we want to learn through him how you manage to do without medicine in China.

Dinner

V. Rasputin and Ch. Aitmatov at the next table. Here and there, there are Lavrovs and [one word unclear], Zal'gins and Filatovs.

Tea at the Embassy

M.S. [Gorbachev]: The first impression,

- 1) Their [the Chinese] interest in the normalization has been confirmed.
- 2) They are worried about what is happening [in Tian'anmen].
- 3) The program [of the visit] must be stuck to [and] followed, so that one does not get the impression that the visit is falling apart.

Beijing is being shaken by student unrest. The main slogan: "You have Gorbachev. And who do we have?"

Efimov: The Americans are asking what the normalization means. Therefore, your [Gorbachev's] words that one must do things calmly, without noise, pampered their [probably, the Chinese] soul.

Instructions for the press:

- 1) Cover widely.
- 2) Cover in a complex manner.

3) Base oneself on realistic approaches.

The [Chinese] character for glasnost-"general opening of the soul"

CT [Central Television] of China: Covers the visit to a greater extent than Bush's visit to China.

Who stands behind the student unrest?

[Evgenii] Primakov: the Chinese think that they have programmed [sic]. The Five Principles is the minimum, they do not want to go lower than that. Stage-by-stage. The intelligentsia are unhappy. They did not get anything as a result of the reforms. The youth have turned their faces to us.

M.S. [Gorbachev]: we were taken by a secret road [from the airport to the city center].

[Mikhail] Titarenko, the head of the Institute of the Far East

[Chingiz] Aitmatov: the youth thirsts for change.

R [Igor Rogachev] makes a comment.

Ia [Aleksandr Iakovlev]: unrest of the Chinese students is a part of a worldwide process.

Ovchinnikov: What do the students want? The same thing as what the [word unclear] made plans for.

Correspondent-member [of the Academy of Sciences] [name unclear]: There are forces in the USA, which desire for our country to be authoritarian. They desire the same for China.

[Kirill] Lavrov: Fear hangs over China. They thirst for interaction with us but they are afraid of it.

Tikhomirov: I am under impression from what we saw on the Tian'anmen square. It is impossible not to connect the visit with these events. All the questions [on the part of the students] are about one thing-to meet with you [Gorbachev]. Institute of Marxism-Leninism. Slogan: "Gorbachev! The people are here and not there!"

Irkutsk and Warsaw. [Two words unclear].

70 thousand students on the Tian'anmen Square. Soldiers in the building of the N[ational] P[eople's] C[ongress]. [Two words unclear].