

May 17, 1989

Diary of Teimuraz Stepanov-Mamaladze, 17 May 1989

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Summary:

Teimuraz Stepanov-Mamaladze diary entry, describing negotiations between China and a USSR delegation. The negotiations cover border issues, Soviet assistance in improving relations between India and Nepal, and Afghanistan, among other issues. Following the negotiations, Mamaladze describes protesters, "two hundred thousand strong," and notes that the movement has grown beyond just students.

Credits:

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Contents:

- English Translation

17 May 1989

M.S. statement at the A[ll-Chinese] C[ongress] of P[eople's] R[epresentatives]. Climbed the wall [possibly a reference to Gorbachev's overly friendly statement]. Then our negotiations with [Foreign Minister] Qian Qichen. The conversation mainly touches on the text of the joint document.

The Chinese accept some formulation of ours.

- And I was about to accept the Chinese version, says E.A. Everyone laughs.

Get stuck with the point about Deng's invitation, which he cannot accept, as he already declared that he has stopped his foreign visits.

Accepted the formulation: "The Chinese side expressed gratitude for the invitation."

- Hereby, Qian Qichen [says] happily, the last question has been settled.

However, [Deputy Foreign Minister] I[gor] A. Rogachev eats into the text like a ruthless catcher of bedbugs [sic]. Qian meets him half-way, displaying limitless readiness for agreement.

This readiness dries up, however, when it comes to Kampuchea, to the statement of the necessity of creation of a four-party coalition government in Kampuchea.

Qian: As our leaders have already had a deep exchange of opinions, we have no right to do the same. We can only talk about formulations.

He offers a concrete version, to a large extent a compromise one, which sends us back to the famous February version.

E.A. agrees.

- This is no big deal.

Another stumbling block is the border question. Yesterday M.S. proposed to solve it through the effort of the ministers, and now the two sides insistently search for a formulation. Found one. And E.A. expresses satisfaction with the quality and the content of the joint document that has come out [of this].

- We have Nepal's request, Qian suddenly says. Nepal has declared a zone of peace and asks the Soviet Union to pay attention to this initiative. "The question concerns your assistance in improving relations between India and Nepal. Concretely, they are talking about export of goods through the channels closed by the Indian side. "

The second request is an appeal by [Benazir] Bhutto in connection with the Soviet-Chinese summit. She expresses commitment to the idea of a settlement in Afghanistan.

- It would be nice if she acted like this in deed and not in words [says Shevardnadze]. The Pakistani leadership, where the military make the call, completely ignore the [April 1988] Geneva Agreements.

E.A. characterizes the situation around Afghanistan.

- We propose to call a conference of neighboring countries.

- That's why we are afraid that Kampuchea will become second Afghanistan [says Qian Qichen].

My handwriting is that of someone writing in half-strength. And while I am half-strengthening my

way through, while Qian Qichen accepts our formulations with surprising readiness, Beijing is boiling over.

While Deng is reading M.S. a lecture about the territorial conquests of tsarist Russia, forcing Yan Mingfu as an “old interpreter” to clarify that comrade Deng cited the words he once said to Tito: “let everything that happened between us to be blown away by the wind,” a two-million strong demonstration is carrying through Beijing slogans such as: “It’s hard to work after you are seventy, after eighty, one cannot lead,” “Deng Xiaoping is 85, Gorbachev is 58,” “China does not need regents.”

By the evening our residence is surrounded by a two hundred thousand strong crowd. Press conference attendance and Beijing opera appearances have been cancelled. Now in the columns of demonstrators there walk and drive not just students—they have been joined by workers and public officials, even diplomats, the PRC Foreign Ministry carries banners with demands of democratization and retirement of odious leaders.

- This is a revolution, asserts E.M. Primakov. Those who have lived through the Cultural Revolution are saying that they cannot remember anything like this.

Could it not happen that we have normalized relations with political dead men?

There are hints to this lurking in the questions which are put to M.S. at the press conference, hastily organized at the residence. He skillfully bounces off these “balls” but they continue to be actively in play.

- Why did you not meet with the students?

- What will you do if there is such a demonstration on the Red Square?

- Please appraise the situation. Does it not mean a crisis of socialism?

The answers are good although at times they have too much of Stavropol Krai’s agitprop [propaganda].

R.M. [Raisa Mikhailovna Gorbacheva, Gorbachev’s wife] is accompanied by a pretty girl, who, as they claim, splits up six bricks with the side of her palm. But she still falls short of her fosterling—she [i.e. Mrs. Gorbachev] is splitting the whole country, not bricks.

Autographs, hands clasping correspondent’s cards, appeals by the professionals, by the “king’s entire army” to the king to step down to them. And he steps down.

What else? Conversation with E.A. about our Tbilisi affairs. Yeltsin flew to Tbilisi together with [former Georgian Communist Party boss] Dzhumber [Patiashvili]. The mafia boss R. Goglidze is collecting signatures in support of the overthrown sovereign. Sulivko Kh. got some kind of hopes up.

- On April 7, after coming back from England, I proposed to Dzhumber: I will come to Tbilisi and help you. He thanked and refused. That would have been fine. But there is no word of this anywhere [says Shevardnadze].