

February 1989

Igor Rogachev's Account of Eduard Shevardnadze's Visit to Beijing

Citation:

"Igor Rogachev's Account of Eduard Shevardnadze's Visit to Beijing", February 1989, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Mongolian Foreign Ministry Archive: fond 2, dans 1, kh/n 539, khuu 6-23. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Sergey Radchenko
<https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/119284>

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This document was made possible with support from MacArthur Foundation

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Confidential

Record of conversation

On February 11, 1989 Minister of Foreign Affairs Ts. Gombosuren received, in his office, Deputy Foreign Minister of the USSR comrade I.A. Rogachev, who arrived on that date in our country on a working visit. [...]

Information of I.A. Rogachev about the visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR in the PRC

This visit is the first official visit of a Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR in the PRC throughout the whole history of Soviet-Chinese relations. Comrade A.A. Gromyko went to China twice. The first time, in 1959, together with comrade Khrushchev, as a member of the delegation. The second time—when the Caribbean Crisis loomed large [sic, probably reference to Gromyko's 1958 visit to China, at the time of the Taiwan Straits Crisis]. This was a closed visit.

I would say that the negotiations and meetings in the PRC were interesting, content-filled, and had good result. The press said a lot about the visit. I will pause on the main issues.

The main task of our visit was to finally agree with the Chinese side about the date of the visit of M.S. Gorbachev to China. We and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the PRC Qian Qichen agreed that the summit would take place in the middle of May. At a meeting with the Premier of the State Council of the PRC Li Peng, the Chinese told us the date: from May 15 to 17, and we agreed to this date. When we met with comrade Deng Xiaoping, he explained to us the visit itinerary.

M.S. Gorbachev will have a meeting with Deng Xiaoping but will conduct the main negotiations with Li Peng. The Chinese passed through us an invitation to M.S. Gorbachev on behalf of the Chairman of the PRC Yang Shangkun. We agreed.

There will be a meeting with the General Secretary of the CC CCP [Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party] Zhao Ziyang. It will mean the restoration of party-to-party relations between our countries.

Four days before the visit of Eduard Amvrosievich in China, comrades Kireev, Vorob'iov, and Miakotnykh departed for China. They carried out great work. They already conveyed the text of the joint concluding document, which will be published as a result of the summit. A very important document. It is called upon to fill the vacuum which was formed after the Chinese annulled the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance. We do not know what its content will be after it is considered by the Chinese side. We conveyed it because we wanted to take the initiative into our hands.

The Chinese will say that they have no practice of adopting big documents. Taking this into account, we wrote into it universal principles of international relations and used the terms the Chinese use. It is known that at the end of last year Deng Xiaoping spoke on the subject of the new political order. It has a lot in common with our new political thinking. Therefore we used their terminology and prepared three versions of the document—a brief one, a long one, and a medium one.

They promised to study our draft and give us a response at the end of February or in the beginning of March. The Chinese propose to include in the documents also those questions, on which we have divergences. They are very apprehensive of creating an impression as if we have a unity of minds and an alliance.

A working group was created at the level of the Deputy Foreign Ministers of the two countries to agree upon this document. We agreed to meet at any time, in any place. At the concluding stage it will be agreed upon and approved at the level of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

For the first time, we agreed about balanced reduction of the military forces and arms in the regions adjacent to the Soviet-Chinese border, to the minimal level. In order to work out questions which arise in this connection we agreed to create a working group of diplomatic and military experts. We have a concept of reduction of military forces and arms in this region, which is a part of our general concept.

The Chinese want for us to make concessions on the border questions. Now almost the entire length of the Eastern section of the border, i.e. 95%, have been examined. There is 40 km left in the vicinity of Khabarovsk and an island on the Argun River. They demand from us that we return this island. This is a very serious question. Several times hints were made that they really count on concessions on the part of the Soviet Union, that the summit will solve all other questions. They say: "one needs to make a breakthrough on the border issues."

Trade-economic and technical-scientific relations with the PRC are developing fairly well. Our economic counselor in China informed [us] that the volume of contracts between the regions adjacent to the border in price equivalent exceeds 1 billion 300 million Swiss francs. Contracts are still being concluded.

The Chinese are offering us workforce. They offered them already in 1954 but we are avoiding it. At the time they offered us more than a million people. Now an appropriate agreement is being developed.

The Chinese are not hiding their interest in developing economic cooperation of the two countries.

We will cooperate in the spheres of energy, transport, seismology, and economy. In June of last year we passed through com[rade Iurii D.] Masliukov our draft plan of trade-economic cooperation until year 2000. After the summit, we will work on agreeing on it. They agree in principle.

The discussion of international questions disclosed similar points of views and approaches. They do not really want to discuss the problems of the Asia Pacific. They are in favor of lessening the military confrontation in this region.

We met with Deng Xiaoping in Shanghai. Deng Xiaoping does not in fact do anything but they consider him the supreme leader in China. A decision of the Central Committee of the CCP states that Deng Xiaoping is the supreme architect of the Chinese reforms.

Deng Xiaoping gave the impression of a very frail man. Although we made compliments, told him that he looked well. He can barely walk. His movements are not well coordinated. But he has a good memory. He recognized me. Probably someone gave him a hint. He said: "I was able to make peace in our relations with America and Japan. While I am still alive I will strive for improvement of our relations with the USSR." He spoke about Vietnam for a long time. He said approximately the following: "Even when we were hungry ourselves, we have the Vietnamese food, clothes, and ammunition. We helped them a lot. But they tricked us. We know the Vietnamese more than you. I am telling you: 'You cannot trust them to the end.'"

Comrade Shevardnadze told him that the Vietnamese will withdraw their forces from

Kampuchea. Why should one not believe them? He responded: "They announced that they would withdraw. They will not withdraw, they will dress up their forces. They cannot be trusted." Shevardnadze told him: "They are our friends, we believe in their honesty, they will carry out their obligations before their allies."

At the end of the meeting with Deng Xiaoping, comrade Shevardnadze asked him: "Shall we fix the date of the summit?" He responded: "You, ministers, discuss the Kampuchean problem." They already warned him that we had not yet arrived at the final agreement to publish a statement on the Kampuchean problem."

We and the Chinese agreed, with difficulty, on seven points of the statement; only the point about the government remained. We proposed to publish the statement without this point, which causes divergences, to leave this point for further consideration. They did not give a definite answer.

We returned to Beijing from Shanghai. We came to the Embassy. Twenty minutes remain to the beginning of the press-conference. A question came up: should we announce the date of the summit. Deng Xiaoping said: "discuss the Kampuchean question." But Li Peng said: "we agree to the date of the summit."

There was a phone call from their Foreign Ministry. The head of the department of the Soviet Union of the MFA PRC asked to convey to comrade minister that he should not announce a concrete date of the summit, because we have not yet fully agreed on the statement on the Kampuchean question.

Such petty blackmail, i.e. pressure. What can be done? We went to the press-conference. The Minister told the journalists: "We agreed with the Chinese comrades that the summit will take place in the middle of May."

After the press-conference we went directly to the airport. Qian Qichen was waiting for us there. He was very gloomy, unhappy. Probably, he watched the press-conference on television.

After our departure, Qian Qichen's deputy held a press-conference, and said: "The middle of May is the proposal of the Soviet Union; the date has not yet been agreed upon."

When we were in Islamabad, Kireev let us know that the Chinese agreed to the date and to the statement on Kampuchea. This is why the date and the statement were published with a delay. This was a little struggle of nerves.

On the Kampuchean problem

We prepared very thoroughly for our visit to Beijing. In the main, the discussion concerned the Kampuchean problem.

In 1983, 1984 the Chinese pushed towards the discussion of this question. But we did not pay attention to this. Such was the request of our Vietnamese and Kampuchean friends. We replied to the Chinese that this question touches on the sovereignty of Vietnam and Kampuchea, therefore it is their internal question.

After the April Plenum of 1985, acting in the spirit of new political thinking, we looked at the road already travelled, put to critical scrutiny all our foreign policy activities, in particular, with respect to Asia. We came to the conclusion that we can actively discuss any questions with any party, without breaking anything. With this, we do not

intend to decide the date of our friends behind their backs.

Beginning from 1985 we and the Chinese began actively discussing the Kampuchean question. As a result we have many thanks from the Vietnamese and Kampuchean friends. Thanks to such active, offensive position, we have a certain result. That being said, before each round of talks we discussed the questions with friends, and consulted [with them]. We do not discuss this question with the Chinese side without the knowledge and agreement of our friends. We were able to influence China's position. Many times we played the role of a middleman between Beijing and Hanoi. Until recently there was no contact between Beijing and Hanoi.

The Chinese defined the Kampuchean problem as the sharpest problem of Soviet-Chinese relations. We proposed to organize separate consultations on the Kampuchean problem within the framework of the Soviet-Chinese political consultations. The Chinese agreed. At the end of August—beginning of September such consultations were held in Beijing. There we and the Chinese reached agreement on a whole series of questions. For example, that the Kampuchean question can only be solved through political means. We informed you about the results of these consultations. Before this meeting, there was a whole press campaign to the effect that great attention is being attached to the working meeting of the deputy ministers of foreign affairs. If we can agree on the Kampuchean question that would favorably influence the prospects of the meeting of the ministers of foreign affairs, and even the summit.

You know about the visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the PRC Qian Qichen to Moscow. During this meeting we reached certain agreement.

That said, before each meeting we consulted with the Kampuchean and the Vietnamese friends. Also, comrade Shevardnadze met several times with personal representatives of [Nguyen Co] Thach and Hun Sen. There were visit by Kireev and Miakotnykh to Hanoi and Phnom Penh. These were closed visits.

In November I was in Hanoi. During the meeting with comrade [Nguyen Co] Thach he told us about the possibility of trying to accept the statement of the ministers of foreign affairs of the USSR and the PRC on the Kampuchean problem.

When Qian Qichen came to Moscow on a visit, comrade [Eduard] Shevardnadze proposed to make a joint statement on the Kampuchean problem. For him [Qian], this was completely unexpected. Qian Qichen was not prepared. He said that they would give an answer later. In January they met in Paris during the chemical weapons conference, and finally agreed on the dates of Shevardnadze's visit to Beijing, and Qian Qichen said that they are ready to adopt a joint statement on the Kampuchean problem.

Having arrived in Beijing, we sensed that the Kampuchean question will also be at the forefront. Qian Qichen said a few phrases about Soviet-Chinese relations, about the situation in the world, and immediately turned to the question of Kampuchea.

What's the matter? The Chinese are now in such a fairly delicate situation before their allies, the Red Khmers, the Pol-Potists, and Sihanouk, too.

In October the Chinese told us: "The main thing for us is a timetable for the withdrawal of the Vietnamese forces. When the last Vietnamese soldier leaves, let the Kampuchean decide their fate themselves. What happens then, we don't care." But now they are not saying this.

Our friends Hun Sen [and] Heng Samrin already strengthened their position. Especially unexpected for the Chinese was the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the P[eo]ple's R[ep]ublic of K[ampuchea] (January 7 of this year). Recently, the

number of military actions and sabotage on the part of the opposition sharply decreased. This shows that the control is being strengthened.

The Chinese are worried about the fates of their friends. Now the main "apple of discord", the main subject of their concern is the question about the future fate of the Red Khmers. They have new concerns, new demands. The main point of the program is the creation of the coalition government headed by Prince Sihanouk, which would consist of four parties. But we and they reached an agreement, as early as the working meeting in Beijing, that the Soviet Union and China would respect the results of free elections. Now we have confirmed this agreement. I tell them: you contradict yourselves when you speak about four parties. They respond: "No, we want the creation of a coalition government made up of four parties." There was a bit debate.

The Americans, the French, the Indians have all told us that the Pol-Potists are actively preparing for a protracted struggle for a long time. The Americans, and our friends in Phnom Penh, have information that the Pol-Potists are creating a hidden storage of food and ammunition in the mountains, which would last two years.

All the Westerners tell us: "be vigilant."

We had the idea of meeting with Sihanouk who was in China. Reagan met with him, and Margaret Thatcher did, too. Would it be worth for us to meet with him? Several days before the arrival of comrade Shevardnadze in Beijing, we sounded out the Chinese position through comrade [Oleg] Troianovskii.

We immediately turned for advice to Hanoi and Phnom Penh. Sihanouk is a figure, without which there can be no political settlement in Kampuchea. On the other hand, Sihanouk's positions have weakened recently. The dialogue between Hanoi and Beijing, Hanoi, and other Asian countries (Philippines, Australia) has already started.

Sihanouk started to get nervous. In November a meeting fell through between Hun Sen and Sihanouk. Sihanouk violated the protocol. There was supposed to be a meeting of Hun Sen with Sihanouk. When Hun Sen turned up, Sihanouk proposed to him to meet with his representative. Hun Sen refused and did the right thing. He also proposed to send his representative. Sihanouk wanted to raise himself above everyone else, as the father of the nation. But our friends saw through his maneuver. Then Sihanouk declared: "I am in a hurry, let's postpone the visit to September 1989."

In recent months, he has sensed that he is losing.

The time is working in our favor. We did not meet with Sihanouk. One has to wait a little longer. There will be a meeting with Sihanouk at some stage. We informed [our] friends about this. They appraised us highly. We were informed that he [Sihanouk] is really upset that there was no meeting with Shevardnadze. He will travel to Pyongyang soon.

Nevertheless, it is very difficult for us, not very easy, to adopt the Soviet-Chinese statement on the Kampuchean problem.

There is a prospect for a political settlement of the Kampuchean problem. This is the main thing. We put great hope in the direct dialogue between Hanoi and Beijing. The Vietnamese comrades have told us that in late February-early March there will be the second round of the Vietnamese-Chinese talks. After this, a meeting of ministers of foreign affairs will be possible.

[continues with discussion of Shevardnadze's visit to Pakistan, Soviet attitude towards North and South Korea and Japan]