

## Snub Lies in Waiting for Gorbachev in Shanghai

By NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF and SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES MAY 12, 1989

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When Mikhail S. Gorbachev strolls on Chinese streets during the summit meeting planned next week to end three decades of hostility between China and the Soviet Union, he is expected to face a snub so blunt as to remind him that there is still a chill in the air.

Mr. Gorbachev will have company when he visits Shanghai on Thursday, the final day of his four-day visit to China: three American warships are scheduled to sail through the city that afternoon and then dock for a port call.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry announced today that the warships would make "a friendly and courteous visit." But the timing seemed carefully calculated to slight Mr. Gorbachev with a demonstration of Chinese-American friendship. Only once before, in 1986, has an American naval ship made a port call in China since the Communists came to power.

The arrival of the ships is just one sign of the lack of enthusiasm some Chinese officials seem to feel for the first Chinese-Soviet summit meeting in 30 years. Their wariness of the meeting, and of the normalization of relations that both sides say will follow, may reassure those Americans who have been concerned by the prospect of renewed ties between the two neighbors. Certainly, it seems to be the Soviets who are chafing at the moment.

The powerful symbolism of a Soviet leader strolling along Shanghai's famous waterfront would be diminished if the backdrop were the even more powerful symbolism of an American flotilla. To avoid this, the adept Soviet advance teams have arranged to whisk Mr. Gorbachev to the Shanghai airport just before the warships arrive in the late afternoon.

The Soviets complained to China about the timing of the ships' visit, diplomats from Eastern bloc as well as Western countries said. Indeed, the Americans even offered to reschedule the visit if it would help avoid an incident, the diplomats added. But the Chinese are said to have replied that the timing did not need to be adjusted.

The Chinese grumpiness seems to reflect a broad ambivalence about Mr. Gorbachev's visit. The summit meeting is coming about not because of any special effort by the Chinese, but only because Mr. Gorbachev has largely met the conditions that China's senior leader, Deng Xiaoping, had set: withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, reduction of troops on the Chinese border, and pressure on Vietnam to withdraw its troops from Cambodia. Now that Mr. Gorbachev has jumped through the hoops and is arriving to claim his prize, Mr. Deng seems unsure how to react.

The disdain for the Soviet Union seems to have its source in Mr. Deng himself. Most Chinese officials seem to believe it is time to improve relations with the Soviet Union, but Mr. Deng has a reputation as a stubborn man who remains suspicious of the Soviets. Behind the Lack of Warmth

Chinese analysts and foreign diplomats suggest there are several reasons for the lack of warmth being displayed toward Mr. Gorbachev:

- \* It is calculated to increase pressure on the Soviets to make last-minute concessions, particularly on Cambodia. Since Mr. Gorbachev appears more eager to improve relations than Mr. Deng, the pressure will be on Mr. Gorbachev to yield on this and other issues.

- \* It will reassure Japan, the United States and various Asian countries that the resumption of normal relations with the Soviet Union will not pose any threat to third countries. At the same time, the lack of enthusiasm will warn Moscow not to expect too much.

- \* It will reduce the attention paid to Mr. Gorbachev, and thereby reduce the risk that unflattering comparisons will be made between him and Mr. Deng.

"A lot of people here think that as long as Deng Xiaoping is around it will be

difficult to have good relations with the Soviet Union," a Soviet bloc diplomat said.

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