

February 1, 1949

Memorandum of Conversation between Anastas Mikoyan and Zhou Enlai

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Summary:

Anastas and Zhou Enlai discuss Muslims in China, Chinese policy in inner Mongolia, the Guomindang navy, Guomindang forces, characteristics of Guomindang leaders, PLA arms, PLA military requests, PLA intelligence, and the organization of the war ministry. (Evening)

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Contents:

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On 1 February 1949 in the evening Zhou Enlai with Zhu De informed me for three hours regarding the military questions. From their side interpreter Shi Zhe was also present, from our side—Comrades I[van] V. Kovalev and E.F. Kovalev

THE MUSLIM QUESTION

At the beginning of the conversation the question was raised about the Muslims of northwestern China and some Guomindang Muslim generals, in particular, Mao Bufan and Ma Hongkui.

To my question as to who supports them, Zhou Enlai replied that the Muslim generals are supported by Jiang Jieshi and the USA. The Americans want to penetrate the Muslim areas of Qinghai and Gansu. In connection with our victories the situation of the Muslim generals and their forces is becoming unstable.

To my question whether there are any demands on the part of the Chinese Muslims Zhou Enlai replied that the Muslims would want to acquire autonomy. They will cooperate with us, he said, if we give them autonomy and display caution with regard to their religion.

Zhou Enlai stressed that the Muslim question in China is a very complex one and this is reflected on the relationships within the forces of the Muslim generals. In these forces the commanding corps are Muslims, and the enlisted men are Chinese. Our policy with regard to the Muslim forces so far entails, firstly, saving them, and then gradually dismissing [them]. In any case at the present time we have no intention to form national forces from their units, it will be possible to talk about this only when deep political work had been carried out among them.

To my remark that the possibility is not ruled out that in case national Muslim forces were organized, the English could take them into their hands, Zhou Enlai expressed his solidarity with me and said that such Muslim units are unreliable.

Continuing to be interested in the Chinese Muslims I asked about their situation in southwestern China. Zhou Enlai replied that in this part of the country there are many small nationalities, which stand at a low level of development and only a few of them rise to high social levels. As an example he referred to the former governor of the Yunnan province Lun Yun, who originated from the Yi tribe. Now Lun Yun is in Hong Kong. At first he flirted with us but now we know that he works against us. We have a firm party organization in Hong Kong, a part of which has a semi-legal status.

POLICY IN INNER MONGOLIA

Talking about Fu Zuoyi, Zhou Enlai said that though he belongs to the group of northwestern militarists, his forces have more Chinese than nationals. Now he is negotiating with us in order to sell the surrender of Beijing [Beijing] more expensively.

Our policy in Inner Mongolia, continued Zhou Enlai, has been accepted well by the local Mongolian population. Gao Gang went there on special duty, [he] conducted great explanatory work in the party organization in connection with the mistakes, which the latter had committed. These mistakes amount to taking the "left" line with respect to the local Mongolian princes and lamas. Land was confiscated from the top princes and at the present time they do not have great power and military forces. However, we consider it possible that under the current circumstances these princes take part in the local Mongolian governments, especially the representatives of young royalty. We even know that some young princes joined the CCP. Now Inner Mongolia

exists with the rights of an autonomous region.

GUOMINDANG NAVY

Jiang Jieshi's fleet is located at the bases: Formosa (Governor Chen Cheng has about 20 thousand forces), Fuzhou, Canton. The fleet is composed of 271 ships presented to China by the USA.

From further questions about the Navy it became clear that they have no idea about the Navy's vessels in the ports and on the bases, have no plans in this regard, except for the Navy of the Yangzi River, with which they have established contact. They are especially interested in this fleet because they believe that it must play a big role when the People's Liberation Army crosses the Yangzi River in the forthcoming attack. They do not have a single Navy vessel, there are no cases of desertions of Navy vessels to their side.

GUOMINDANG FORCES

Further Zhou Enlai gave a characterization of the Guomindang forces at different fronts. He said that the main forces of Jiang Jieshi are located in the Shanghai-Wuhu-Nanjing theater. About 58 divisions are concentrated here, about 380 thousand people. Jiang Jieshi has not retreated yet but intends to go south from here in the direction of Hankou and Nanchang. The commander of the forces of this theater, General Tang Enbo, is a trusted person of Jiang Jieshi.

The second theater of the Guomindang forces is in the Hankou area. It is headed by general Bai Chongxi. 32 divisions or about 210 thousand people are under his command. Bai Chongxi also intends to retreat to the south across the Yangzi River.

The third theater of the Guomindang forces, in Xi'an area, is headed by Hu Zhongnan. At his disposal are 36 divisions or 190 thousand people.

Jiang Jieshi relies on these army groups. In all he has 120 divisions or 800 thousand people. Therefore if we throw against Jiang Jieshi our 181 divisions, i.e. about 2 million 200 thousand people, the Guomindang forces will not withstand our pressure.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GUOMINDANG LEADERS (SUN ZIWEN, ZHANG ZHIZHONG, SHAO LIZI)

Talking about [prominent GMD politician] Sun Ziwun [T.V. Soong], Zhou Enlai said that he is sitting it out in Canton and, not being a military man, does not pose a great danger to us. We know that he intends to go the USA. He uses his official position well for personal enrichment. Jiang Jieshi is unhappy with him as he did not carry out his assignment regarding the formation of 6 divisions in southern China just as we created guerrilla areas on the island of Hainan and hold 5-7 counties there in our hands. There are also guerrilla bases in the provinces of Jiangsu, Anhui, and Zhejiang.

Characterizing General Zhang Zhizhong, Zhou Enlai said that he, of course, is Jiang Jieshi's man, but justice requires that one note that though he is his trusted person, he has a clear head and he cannot help but see the inevitable victory of the new forces. During Jiang Jieshi's counterrevolutionary coup d'etat in 1927 he parted with him and openly declared that he would not struggle against the communists. After Japan's capitulation he once again confirmed this declaration, continuing his support for Jiang Jieshi. He takes into account the strength of the Sov[iet] Union and understands that it must not be irritated, and therefore flirts with you. His "pro-Soviet" sentiment is used by Jiang Jieshi in the talks with the CCP. We know that

Zhang Zhizhong is in a hurry to go to Lanzhou so as to put his forces together there, make contact with us and bargain out a place for his participation in the formation of the forthcoming government. His participation in the government will depend on whether he transfers his forces to us or not. If he does, then, perhaps, we will involve him as the only one who had taken our side. We do not have illusions in his regard, we know that he is an orthodox Guomindang-ist and in case of his defection to our side one can expect that he will become the center of gravitation for all the discontented elements. One should take into consideration that he is trying to create a good impression of himself in the eyes of the Sov[iet] Union.

The former Ambassador in the USSR Shao Lizi is better than Zhang Zhizhong but he is also Jiang Jieshi's running dog. He is familiar with the Sov[iet] Union but on the whole he is an unstable figure.

We do not have contacts with the Xinjiang democratic groups. Our former people there were arrested by [one time governor of Xinjiang] Sheng Shicai. Now we are sending there a small group of party comrades.

PLA ARMS

Talking about the PLA arms, Zhou Enlai said that they do not have a unified rear and unified logistics (intendantstvo) but they plan to put things in order here. First and foremost they will begin with the unification of the war industry, which has only grown since 1948 and even so primarily in Manchuria. Of the military arsenals Mukden's takes the first place, followed by that in Taiyuan. We manufacture bombs, shells, explosive substances, mountain cannons, machine guns, shrapnel. The Mukden arsenal produces the most ammunition. In comparison with the previous years, production of ammunition increased by 50%. We receive some things from North Korea.

Now we have about 900 thousand rifles, more than 50 thousand light machine guns, about 80 thousand medium [stankovykh] machine guns and about 60 thousand automatic [heavy?] machine guns, more than 10 thousand mountain cannons, about 6 thousand rocket launchers. We feel a shortage of mountain weapons and anti-aircraft weapons; we only have 108 of the latter. In this connection we would like to ask the Sov[iet] Union to supply us with a certain amount of anti-aircraft weapons of Japanese, German, or Czechoslovak type with ammunition for the protection of Beiping [Beijing], Tianjin, Mukden and other cities.

PLA MILITARY REQUESTS

We, Zhou Enlai said, feel a great shortage of anti-tank weapons, of which we have only 150 pieces, in which connection we would like to ask the Sov[iet] Union to give us a certain amount of anti-tank weapons. We have an unfavorable situation with regard to the tanks as well. The available tanks are mainly light, the heaviest is 15 tons. Near Suizhou we captured up to 70 tanks, but in the main already considerably worn out ones. We are running short on materials and we would like to get from the Sov[iet] Union TNT for manufacturing ammunition. We would like to ask the Sov[iet] Union to give us also specialists and equipment for manufacture of arms, and also advisers on army reorganization, on military-educational institutions and organization of the rear, including the arms industry.

I replied that we in principle agree to help with the organization of arms manufacture and to give advisers; as to the question of anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons, I cannot say anything and will pass [this] on to Moscow for consideration.

Further Zhou Enlai said that that they would like to obtain from us steel rails,

gasoline, about 5,000 cars and a series of others machines and materials, to which I replied that with all these requests one needs to direct an application to our government.

PLA INTELLIGENCE

During the conversation Zhou Enlai stressed that intelligence plays a great role in the running of their military operations, in particular, radio interceptions. In this sphere we have substantial achievements in comparison with the Guomintangists. We, Zhou Enlai said, decipher the Guomintang and even American codes.

ON THE ORGANIZATION OF THE WAR MINISTRY

Regarding the war ministry Zhou Enlai said that they intend to place communists in it, but it is possible that the military committee will have, for appearance, some Guomintang generals. All military questions, Zhou Enlai said, must be discussed at the forthcoming 2nd Plenum of CCP CC in Beiping [Beijing].

The conversation ended at this.