

March 23, 1944

**Letter No. 93 from L.D. Wilgress, Canadian
Embassy, Moscow, to the Secretary of State for
External Affairs, W.L. Mackenzie King**

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Summary:

L.D. Wilgress and the Chinese Ambassador to Moscow, Fu Bingchang (Foo Ping-sheung), discuss Soviet movements in Xinjiang.

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CANADIAN LEGATION

CANADIAN EMBASSY
MOSCOW, March 23, 1944.SECRETNo. 93

Sir:-

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your despatch No. 14 of January 21, 1944, enclosing copies of two memoranda, dated January 15th and 17th respectively, prepared by Mr. E.H. Norman of the Department of External Affairs and outlining his conversations in Washington with Mr. J.K. Fairbank and Mr. Owen Lattimore regarding the situation in China. The information given in these two memoranda is of the greatest interest and of the most value to us as providing an insight into conditions in China which enables us to discuss more intelligently questions concerning Sino-Soviet relations.

2. I called on Mr. Foo Ping Sheung, the Chinese Ambassador, on March 22nd and bearing in mind the information Mr. Norman secured from Mr. Owen Lattimore regarding the Soviet withdrawal from Sinkiang I questioned the Ambassador on this subject. You will recall from my previous despatches that Mr. Foo was Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs at Chungking when the Chinese Government asked the Soviet Government to withdraw from Sinkiang.

3. I asked Mr. Foo when it was that the Chinese Government first approached the Soviet Government on this question and he replied that in July, 1942, he had a conversation with the Soviet Ambassador at Chungking and had suggested that the time had arrived for the Soviet Government to deal again directly with the Chinese Government and not with the local governor on questions relating to Sinkiang. This date is of interest because Mr. Owen Lattimore had indicated to Mr. Norman that the approach had been made in the autumn of 1942 when the battle for Stalingrad was at its height.

4. Mr. Foo then went on to relate that the Soviet Government had immediately complied with the Chinese Government's request. Thereupon Mr. Foo sent Mr. Chaucer Wu to Urumchi in August, 1942, to be the representative of the Chinese Foreign Ministry at the Governor of Sinkiang, Sheng Shih-tsai. Mr. Wu commenced negotiations on the spot with the Soviet representatives for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hami and other centres in Sinkiang. In February, 1943, Mr. Foo himself passed through Sinkiang on his way to Moscow as Ambassador. He spent several days in Urumchi and brought Mr. Chaucer Wu with him to Moscow, where he remained for three months before returning to Urumchi.

5. Since that time negotiations have been carried on in Urumchi between Mr. Wu and the Soviet representatives, with Mr. Foo intervening in Moscow whenever this appeared to be necessary. I have outlined in previous despatches the progress of these negotiations (see particularly paragraph 8 of despatch No. 87 of July 13th and paragraph 6 of despatch No. 186 of November 6th). Mr. Foo told me yesterday that the negotiations /have

The Right Honourable,
The Secretary of State
for External Affairs,
OTTAWA, Canada.

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have been satisfactorily concluded and Mr. Wu has reported that all outstanding questions have been cleared up. There was some difficulty about payment for the barracks erected by the Soviet Government at Hami but this question was settled as referred to in paragraph 6 of my despatch No. 186 of November 6th. In no other case did the Chinese authorities consider the compensation asked for Soviet installations to be other than fair and reasonable.

6. I asked Mr. Foo if the Soviet Government had removed any of the industrial installations they had established in Sinkiang and he replied in the negative. I then asked him if they had also left trucks and other equipment of a semi-military nature and he replied that the trucks to the number of about two hundred had remained in Sinkiang but had been retained by a Soviet transport organization which was using them for the trade between Alma Ata and Hami carrying Soviet oil products for use in Sinkiang and China proper and taking back minerals which the Soviet Government were anxious to obtain from China.

7. I cannot tell how far Mr. Foo was trying to paint an unduly favourable picture, but he talked quite frankly. I, of course, was careful not to indicate that I had any information to the contrary. There is no doubt that Soviet influence in Sinkiang will continue to be strong because Alma Ata has become the chief gateway to the whole area which is now much more accessible from that city than from any important centre in China. It is perhaps to counteract this economic dependence of Sinkiang on the Soviet Union that the Chinese Government have been so anxious to establish the overland route for the transport of war supplies to China through India, Baluchistan, Iran, Turk-Sib Railway and Sinkiang. No progress has been made in the negotiations for this route and the trucks which had arrived at the Iranian-Soviet border, loaded with supplies for China, have returned to India. Mr. Foo still believes that fear of incurring the displeasure of Japan is the chief motive for Soviet reluctance to agree to the opening of this route and he has not entirely given up hope that the route may be established before the Burma Road is freed from the Japanese. Whatever Soviet motives it is clear from the above that Chinese sovereignty over Sinkiang is fully recognized by the Soviet Government.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(Sgd) L.D. Wilgress

ldw/p

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