

June 10, 1944

Situation in China

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Summary:

Harriman and Stalin discuss Chinese internal politics, relations with the Soviet Union, and the fight against the Japanese.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan
Transcript - English

THE AMBASSADOR

~~SECRET~~

Conversation.

June 10, 1944
The Kremlin

Present: The American Ambassador, Mr. Harriman
Marshal Stalin
Mr. V. M. Molotov

Mr. Page, Second Secretary of the American
Embassy
Mr. Pavlov, Secretary to Mr. Molotov

Subject: Situation in China.

In discussing Soviet participation in the war against Japan, the Marshal brought up the subject of China and exhibited great interest in the situation in China. He emphasized that something should be done to improve it, and sought my views thereon. I said that as the President had stated at Tehran, the Generalissimo was the only man to hold China together. The Marshal agreed. I said that the President felt that Chiang should be encouraged on two points: (1) to settle with the Communists in the North so that all could unite in the war against Japan and to cease looking with enmity at each other, and (2) to liberalize his internal policies. The Marshal remarked "this is easier said than done". I said that the President would appreciate receiving his views on the subject.

The Marshal replied that Chiang was the best man under the circumstances -- unfortunately none better had arisen -- and he must be supported. However, his faults must always be borne in mind. From the military point of view the Chinese had fought better five years ago than they are fighting now. For example, 40 Chinese divisions in Loyang were recently defeated by 13 Japanese divisions. Militarily the Chinese are very weak but nonetheless they should be helped. With respect to the Chinese Government a good part of Chiang's entourage were "crooks", even traitors, and everything going on in Chungking became known to the Japanese the next day. Chiang's great second fault was his refusal to use the Chinese Communists against the enemy. This is a stupid policy. Instead of employing them against Japan he continues to dispute with them on ideological grounds. The Chinese Communists are not real Communists; they are "margarine" communists. Nevertheless, they are real patriots and they want to fight the Japanese.

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Conversation
w.A. Harriman
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I inquired whether the Marshal had any suggestions as to our joint policy vis-à-vis China. He stated that Chiang should be brought more strongly under the influence of the Americans -- we should and could take the leadership with respect to China. The Soviets and the British could not do so. This American leadership and guidance, however, must be flexible. For example, some good men might spring up in China. If so, they should be supported and charged with authority. The Marshal maintained that the young generals in China had no prospect of promotion or advancement, for they all feared the Chiang entourage.

I inquired as to the present status of Sino-Soviet relations and remarked that there appeared to be difficulties. The Marshal stated that Chiang and his group were spreading false propaganda to the effect that the Soviet Union had signed a secret alliance with Japan aimed at China. Similar nonsense, unfriendly to the Soviet Union, was being put out by the Chiang entourage. When asked why they resorted to such a policy, they simply denied that they had. With respect to Soviet policy vis-à-vis China, the Marshal stated that the Soviet position was based on the Soviet-Chinese Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression. This treaty had automatically expired but had been prolonged. He said that there was no intention to change this policy.

I inquired as to the Mongolian-Sinkiang border incidents. The Marshal replied that Chiang was not at fault, but rather the Urumchi Governor, who was a "great adventurer". He had wished to move some Kazaks and some of them did not wish to comply with his wishes. There had been conflicts between them and Sinkiang troops; groups had crossed the Mongolian border, the Sinkiang troops after them, and the Mongolian frontier guards had driven the Sinkiang troops back. The Mongolian Government had approached the Soviet Government requesting assistance if real trouble arose and the Soviet Government had agreed to come to the aid of Mongolia. However, the situation had quieted down and at the present time everything was tranquil.

I inquired whether Soviet planes had participated in the border skirmishes. The Marshal replied that several squadrons of Soviet planes had been turned over to their Mongolian ally. Some of these planes had participated. They were piloted by Mongolian fliers, however. The Marshal added that if Sinkiang troops endeavored to invade Mongolia, Soviet armed forces would be sent to the assistance of that country.

SECRET

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[redacted] The Kremlin

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- [redacted] Marshal Stalin
- [redacted] Mr. Molotov

- [redacted] Mr. Page, Second Secretary of Embassy
- [redacted] Mr. Pavlov, Secretary to Mr. Molotov

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