

# Record of a conversation between Gov. Sheng Shicai and Comrades Stalin, Molotov, and Voroshilov

The Kremlin, Moscow, 2 September 1938

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## A CONVERSATION

between CDES. STALIN, MOLOTOV, AND VOROSHILOV AND THE GOVERNOR [Sheng Shicai] WHICH OCCURRED IN THE KREMLIN ON 2 SEPTEMBER 1938

Upon entry the Governor was greeted by Cdes. STALIN, MOLOTOV, and VOROSHILOV. Greeting [them] he inquired about Cde. STALIN's health and the latter asked in response whether the Governor had arrived in good health. The Governor expressed gratitude for the cordial welcome which he had had in the Soviet Union. Then the Governor greeted Cdes. MOLOTOV and VOROSHILOV and thanked the Soviet government for the aid which it was giving Xinjiang in their capacity.

Cde. STALIN asked him a question - is there an army in Xinjiang[?] The Governor replied that there are military units, but not in great strength and explained this by the fact that the financial condition of Xinjiang is very bad and there is no need to support a large army. To this Cde. STALIN said, "How can [you] live without a good army, on whom do you rely then?". And he added that one or the other needs to be chosen, you won't be able to have [both] a hard currency and a good army. In reply to the Governor's comment that there are very few Chinese in Xinjiang, and that is why there is no one from whom to create a reliable army, Cde. VOROSHILOV asked what percentage do the Chinese compose of the population in Xinjiang. Having found out that Chinese are 10% of the population, that is, about 400,000, Cde. VOROSHILOV and Cde. STALIN noted that this is a

completely sufficient number from which to select about 20,000 young Chinese and train them well in military schools to create a good, reliable army. The Governor agreed with this.

Cde. MOLOTOV asked whether there were any industrial enterprises in Xinjiang. The Governor replied that there were none yet. Then Cde. VOROSHILOV asked the question whether the Governor knew that the central government planned to build a large aircraft factory in Xinjiang. The Governor replied that he knew about this from Ambassador YANG [Jie], who told him this during a visit to the Governor.

Cde. STALIN asked whether there was oil in Xinjiang and was it being developed? The Governor replied that there is oil, development has been started, but it still has not been developed because the specialist from the Soviet Union has not yet arrived. In reply to Cde. STALIN's question, were there drills, the Governor replied that they have not yet arrived. Then Cde. STALIN asked whether there is wood, since great deal of wood is necessary both to develop oil and to build a factory. The Governor replied that there is wood, but Cde. VOROSHILOV objected to him, saying that the wood there is insufficient and very difficult to deliver. A map was brought in in order to specify in what places oil exploration was located and how far from it was wood to be found and the location of both was clarified on it.

Then Cde. VOROSHILOV asked the Governor whether he knew about the central government's intention to organize a large military school in Urumqi. The Governor replied that he did not know about this, only that an air school was to be organized there. After this Cde. STALIN asked whether there were any Chinese pilots and, receiving a positive reply, noted that there are well-trained and very brave Chinese pilots in Central China. In this connection the Governor was asked the question, does he have authority from the central government to conclude an agreement with the Soviet Union concerning the organization of an airline? The Governor replied that he has such authority in which the line from Lanzhou to Hami will be under the management of the Central Government, but from Hami to Alma-Ata [it will be] under his (the Governor's) [management]. Cde. VOROSHILOV confirmed that this should be so.

Then Cdes. STALIN, MOLOTOV, and VOROSHILOV asked the Governor questions about the economy of Xinjiang and its natural resources. Among other things, Cde. STALIN asked whether there was tin there. The Governor replied in the affirmative. Then Cde. STALIN asked whether there was gold and whether there was much of it. The Governor replied that there is gold in some districts, but exploitation has begun only in Altay.

Cde. MOLOTOV asked whether the Governor has any plan concerning the development of industry in Xinjiang, and was he thinking of building any factories, developing the natural resources of Xinjiang, etc. The Governor replied that he does not have a big plan, but only the plan in accordance with which the five-million [ruble] was made.

In reply to Cde. MOLOTOV's question does the Governor think that Xinjiang has become sufficiently consolidated at the present time the Governor replied that although the situation in Xinjiang right now is many times better than it was before the April revolution, it cannot be considered finally firm.

Cde. VOROSHILOV asked the Governor the question, do many in Xinjiang have convenient land [?]. The Governor was not able to reply to this question and said only that more than 20% of all the land is occupied by sandy desert. Consequently the discussion turned to plowmen and the Governor said that recently Mongols and Kazakhs started to settle the land and that this is the result of skillful agitation. However, both Cde. STALIN and Cde. VOROSHILOV expressed the opinion that this settlement was unnecessary and that they had seized the land only thanks to the fact that their livestock had been rustled by the Manchurians; they had grabbed the land, but as soon as they get livestock again they will abandon the land and leave and roam.

Cde. STALIN asked the question, what do the Chinese in Xinjiang mainly do[?] The Governor replied that they are merchants, craftsmen, and peasants.

In reply to Cde. STALIN's question, which merchants are better, Chinese or Uyghur, the Governor replied that in Xinjiang the Uyghur merchant is better, but both the Uyghur merchants are bigger, HUSAIN and TURSUN BAB, and the largest Chinese firms, [Boda-Gongsy] and [Die-xing-huo], turned out to be Japanese agents. He

was asked the question, are there Trotskyites in Xinjiang. The Governor replied that there were Trotskyites, but all have just been arrested by the Governor.

Cde. STALIN added to this that besides the Trotskyites he still had nationalists who are led from their territory by Uzbeks.

He was also asked a question about the work of our specialists and instructors in Xinjiang. The Governor praised both, however Cde. MOLOTOV noted that "we ourselves are dissatisfied with some of them" and the Governor is praising everyone in vain, not talking about the shortcomings in the work. To this the Governor said that the first instructors who were left by KUZ'MICH after the elimination of the first Manchurian uprising did not work sufficiently well. The latest are working very well.

Cde. VOROSHILOV asked a question about SHANIN. The Governor remembered him favorably. Then the discussion turned to APRESOV and Cde. STALIN asked whether it was true that APRESOV threatened the Governor, the latter confirmed this and said that after APRESOV came to Urumqi the second time APRESOV's behavior had changed sharply: he gathered a group of harmful people around him and in response to a demand by the Governor to send these people to other cities he categorically refused, declaring that in not trusting these people the Governor was not trusting APRESOV, but in not trusting him, he does not trust the Soviet government, and this thereby inflicts great damage on him (the Governor).

Cde. MOLOTOV said that APRESOV left right after the 36th Division to catch up to it and hardly would return soon, if he returned at all.

Cde. VOROSHILOV asked the question, is there anything of the 36th Division left in Xinjiang[?] The Governor replied that there is no longer anything left of the 36th Division and he was not sorry that Cde. VOROSHILOV asked this. Then the Governor was asked the question of how MENNI was working, in which Cde. STALIN stressed that the Governor should answer this question sincerely, without concealing anything. The Governor recalled MENNI's work favorably, declaring that he had not yet had any misunderstandings with MENNI.

To the question, when did the Governor plan to return, he replied that he wants to return by the congress set for 18 September.

Cde. VOROSHILOV was interested what congress this will be and the Governor explained to him. STALIN approved such an undertaking and asked if such congresses happen often.

The Governor said that this will be the third congress this year. These congresses should be held annually, but since there were disturbances in Xinjiang in 1936-1937 the congresses could not be held.

Cde. MOLOTOV asked whether the Governor had any questions, and the Governor replied that if they have the time he has one question for Cde. STALIN personally. They replied to him that there is always enough time for business. Then the Governor said that he has a very old dream of joining the Party, that he repeatedly addressed this request to APRESOV, and held a conversation on this subject with WANG MING, when the latter was in Xinjiang. WANG MING welcomed this intention of the Governor and promised to give him a recommendation. He explained his desire to join the Party by the fact that, familiarizing himself with the teachings of MARX-ENGELS-LENIN-STALIN, he understood that these are the only teachings which needed to be followed, and what is more he had been convinced by experience that the government of the only socialist country in the world is helping the weaker and oppressed nationalities not in word, but indeed, and his wish to join the Party was strengthened. At the present time he has received a fortunate opportunity, to personally talk with the leader of the world proletariat, Cde. STALIN, and had therefore decided to use this opportunity to express his request. And if Cde. STALIN thinks it possible to accept him into the ranks of the Party then he would be very happy.

Cde. STALIN replied that if the Governor is very insistent on this then he does not object; however, Cde. VOROSHILOV protested, saying that this might harm the Governor's work since, having found out about this, both JIANG JIESHI [Chiang Kai-shek] and Ambassador YANG would be very dissatisfied about this. The Governor replied that this would have to be kept secret and that neither the first nor the second would find out

about it. Cde. STALIN objected to this, stating that it would be very difficult to keep this fact a secret because he would have to be attached to some organization, and consequently this would become known to several people. Cde. VOROSHILOV added that any Party member can stop being one or transfer to another Party, and then the secret might become known to outsiders. Cde. STALIN asked the question, will not JIANG JIESHI think that the Governor was intimidated and forced to join the Party by force? The Governor objected to this, stating that JIANG JIESHI will not find this out, and began to again persist with his request. Then, consulting with Cdes. MOLOTOV and VOROSHILOV, Cde. STALIN replied that they do not object in principle and if the Governor insists they agree. Cde. MOLOTOV noted that the Governor will have new rules and new responsibilities upon joining the Party. To this the Governor replied that he is not afraid of any responsibilities and will fulfill them all with pleasure.

After this, Cde. MOLOTOV, finding out that the Governor had come with [his] family, asked how he would see it if the entire family were invited to dinner. The Governor was even perplexed at this invitation, and declared this his wife would be very happy since she had repeatedly expressed a desire to see the leader of the world proletariat, Cde. STALIN, and members of the Soviet government but he, the Governor, had forbidden her from even hinting about this since leaders can't be bothered with her. In reply to this Cde. STALIN that they think so badly about us, that we are very simple people and accessible to everyone. It was arranged that the dinner would be on the 6th at 6:30 or 7 P.M.

Cde. MOLOTOV asked the question, does the Governor think it necessary to invite Ambassador YANG to the dinner[?] The Governor replied that he leaves this issue to the discretion of Cde. MOLOTOV and after Cde. MOLOTOV began to insist on the Governor's opinion, the latter diplomatically said that it would be impossible to talk frankly in the presence of YANG. Speaking among themselves, the leaders decided not to invite YANG, especially as they had already received him.

Then Cde. STALIN asked the Governor's opinion of General MA (I don't remember the first name), adding that if they have to fight with Japan then we will immediately suggest that the Nanking government promote the person to occupy a senior position in Manchuria. The Governor gave an average appraisal of MA. Then Cde. STALIN asked the question, who in the Governor's opinion could be promoted to the leadership of Manchuria. The Governor pointed to the Communist Party and the 8th Army, from which a person could be chosen, however Cde. STALIN objected, saying that such a person would not be suitable since he will not be able to unite everyone and here a Sun Yat-sen [sunyatsenovets] is needed whom everyone without exception would agree to.

Then they asked the Governor's opinion of: SONG FO, ZHANG XUELIANG, FANG YU XIAN, WANG JINGWEI, and a number of others. The Governor gave them all a negative appraisal, adding in the process that China's battle with Japan had united them since they are all nationalists, but this war need only to end and each of them will be pulled to their own side, forgetting the interests of the people. Cde. STALIN objected, explaining that all the unifications of countries have occurred by the sword. Countries are united only in wars. He cited the example of Italy and Germany, each of which united in wars with their oppressors. He also cited the example of Russia, which was united in endless wars.

Cde. STALIN asked the Governor whether it was true that he had studied in Japan, and receiving a confirmatory answer, asked whether they teach the Chinese well in Japan. The Governor said that they cannot teach Chinese well since they do not intend to graduate good military people capable of rebuffing the Japanese, and the seizure of China is in their plans.

Cde. VOROSHILOV said that he had heard that Ambassador YANG had also studied in Japan. The Governor confirmed this, pointing out that YANG graduated a year earlier. Then Cde. STALIN asked the Governor's opinion of YANG and the latter replied that YANG is a very smart person, but that he is an inveterate militarist and even while in the academy he did not devote much attention to political sciences at all and very much to military [sciences].

In conclusion they again returned to the question of the Governor's acceptance into the Party and Cde. VOROSHILOV again warned him about the harm which his work might be caused by this fact, but since the Governor began to again insist on his request he was given consent.

During the discussion between Cde. STALIN and a secretary who had entered the Governor addressed a request to Cde. VOROSHILOV about settling his brother (who is sick) in a school in Moscow or in a motor and mechanics or an artillery school. Cde. VOROSHILOV asked if he knew Russian and, finding out that he did not, said that it would be very difficult to do, but promised to nevertheless do everything possible, declaring that one brother more, one brother less, is of no importance.

In parting the Governor said that he had brought some gifts and asked that they be accepted. Cde. Stalin declared that he was doing this in vain since if JIANG JIESHI found out he would think that he wants to bribe them. The Governor objected to the [notion] that JIANG JIESHI would think anything [of it] since it was Chinese custom to make gifts as a memento.

Cde. VOROSHILOV noted that once he gives them gifts he will have to leave here with gifts. As a result, the leaders agreed to accept the gifts.

The meeting with Cde. STALIN was very unexpected for the Governor since he only expected to meet with Cdes. MOLOTOV and VOROSHILOV, as he had been told. This meeting made an enormous impression on him and all the time on the way back he reiterated that not everyone gets to see STALIN and he was struck at their simplicity and deep attention to each question.

It remained unclear for him about his acceptance in the Party whether they had given him agreement or not. I repeated what Cde. STALIN said, if the Governor very much insists, he has no objection. The Governor repeated that, in spite of Cde. STALIN's statement, that it is impossible to keep the Governor's joining the Party a secret, the latter nevertheless is thinking of keeping it a secret and no one will know about this besides me, even MENNI, although he repeatedly asked the latter to help him on this issue.

[signature]

(YULINA)

2 September 1938