

April 13, 1949
Cable, Kovalev to Filippov [Stalin]

Citation:

"Cable, Kovalev to Filippov [Stalin]," April 13, 1949, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, APRF: F. 45, Op. 1, D. 331, Ll. 15-21. Reprinted in Andrei Ledovskii, Raisa Mirovitskaia and Vladimir Miasnikov, Sovetsko-Kitaiskie Otnosheniia, Vol. 5, Book 2, 1946-February 1950 (Moscow: Pamiatniki Istoricheskoi Mysli, 2005), pp. 116-120. Translated for CWIHP by Sergey Radchenko.

<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113353>

Summary:

Kovalev reports to Filippov (Stalin) about the conversation Kovalev had with Mao, Zhu De, Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, and several members of the CCP Politburo. The topics discussed include an appraisal of the work and decisions of the second plenum of the CCP CC, the Soviet loan to China, the military situation in China, the city of Shanghai, and the peace talks between the CCP and Guomindang representatives.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

- English Translation

To Comrade Filippov

Reporting:

On 9 April a three hour conversation with Cde. Mao Zedong took place at which were present members of the CCP Politburo comrades Zhu De, Zhou Enlai and Liu Shaoqi.

During the conversation Cde. Mao Zedong briefly shed light on the following questions:

1. Gave an appraisal of the work and the decisions of the second plenum of the CCP CC.
2. On the loan, given by the USSR
3. About the military situation in China and the prospects of war against the Guomindang forces
4. About the city of Shanghai and its specifics.
5. About the course of the peace talks with the Guomindang representatives
6. About the second Plenum of CCP CC.

The Plenum, Cde. Mao Zedong said, took place at a high level of political ideology. The statements of the members of the CC were active and rich in content with the exception of Wang Ming, who spoke more than once, but at the insistence of the members of the CC who demanded from him recognition of all of his former mistakes; until the end, however, his statements were unclear and unsatisfactory.

Com[rade] Mao Zedong expressed his particular satisfaction that the VKP(b) CC approved the decisions of the Plenum. He stressed his desire to acquaint the leading Russian communists in the liberated areas of China with the decisions of the plenum.

On the loan.

We are grateful, Cde. Mao Zedong said, to the VKP(b) CC and first and foremost to comrade Filippov for this big support for the CCP. This loan is the collateral of the victory of the Chinese Revolution and the realization of friendship of the two great peoples.

Comrade Mao Zedong asked to help them to make a plan of rational usage of

the loan, first and foremost for the restoration of crucial branches of the industry and of the railroad transport. At the same time he added that we very badly need the soonest arrival in China of the Soviet specialists.

Comrade Mao Zedong informed that the American government through third persons (Citibank) is offering a loan to the amount from 100 to 300 million dollars. We look at this offer, Comrade Mao Zedong said, as an attempt to drag us into a deal not for providing aid to the Chinese people, but for saving American capitalism from a crisis (in accordance with the Marshall Plan) and for putting the Chinese people under the yoke, in the same way as they were able to do this under the Jiang Jieshi regime.

On the military situation in China and the prospects of war against the Guomindang forces.

We, Comrade Mao Zedong said, consider the victory over the Guomindang forces to be decided [and] the war—finished.

We do not expect large military operations with the Guomindang forces. The Yangzi River will probably be crossed without big battles.

We make this conclusion on the basis that, first of all, the Guomindang forces defending the Yangzi and cities of Nanjing, Shanghai and Hankou are two and a half times smaller than our forces located on the Northern bank of the Yangzi.

Secondly, there is no unity among the Guomindang. Some generals, like Bai Chongxi who has at his disposal 32 divisions, have already established contacts with us so as to agree about settling the question by peaceful means like it was in Beiping [Beijing] with general Fu Zuoyi.

Thirdly, the leaders of the Guomindang government and first and foremost Li Zongren and [GMD General] He Yingqin do not have confidence in the strength of the Guomindang forces for beating back our attack when crossing the Yangzi and therefore they established contacts with us expressing an intention to fly into Beiping [Beijing] so as to agree on the transfer of the Central government into our hands and the transfer to us of the cities of Nanjing and Shanghai.

Further, Comrade Mao Zedong pointed out that the delegates of the Guomindang government who had arrived for the peace negotiations, after sharp criticism of them on the part of the CCP CC both at the meetings, and in the press, changed their arrogant behavior, to which they held in the beginning.

At official consultations they behave themselves seemingly in the same way as before, but at closed meetings with us in separate groups they in essence agree to all conditions put forward by us, limiting themselves merely to reservations, in

particular, that one does not name concrete persons for now in the war criminal list.

They agree that the People's Liberation Army must cross the Yangzi and take Nanjing and Shanghai but request that it does so after the end of the peace negotiations.

On the city of Shanghai and its specifics

Comrade Mao Zedong dwelled particularly on this question. He said that if the Guomindang forces pose resistance when [the PLA] crosses the Yangzi, we will cross it anyhow and take Nanjing and Shanghai.

However, to take these cities will be easier than to run them. Shanghai is a special city, stressed Comrade Mao Zedong—this is the center of economic and political interests of foreign capitalists, the center of the Guomindang and foreign counterrevolution, espionage and intelligence.

More than 8 million people live in Shanghai and its suburban areas. Big industry, electricity stations (200 thousand kilowatts), water supply, tramways, buses—all of this almost fully belongs to the American capitalists. And we, he said, are apprehensive that in case of complications the Americans will paralyze the life of the city.

This apprehension of ours is connected with our lack of experience with running such a big city, we do not have specialists, capable of handling the management and usage of the electrical station, water supply, large textile and other enterprises.

We are apprehensive of this, said Comrade Mao Zedong, and therefore until now we have not firmly decided whether to take Shanghai into our hands.

We request the VKP(b) CC, if this is possible, to help us with specialists specifically meant for the city of Shanghai, sending them by the time of our capture of the city.

We request also to help us with specialists for struggle against espionage and intelligence. If for some reasons specialists are not sent we will not be offended, knowing that such a decision may only be taken in the interests of the revolution.

In case of capture of Nanjing and Shanghai, secretary of the bureau of the CC of Central China comrade Yao Raoshi will be appointed as the secretary of the city committee of Shanghai (strong party worker, studied in Moscow for two years). I met with him and will report on the conversation separately. The [post

of the] mayor of Shanghai is intended for general Chen Yi, the mayor of Nanjing —general Liu Bocheng.

Comrade Mao Zedong is concerned as to how to supply Shanghai with food and raw materials, for they will not be able to provide for delivery by railroad transport alone, and they do not have a Navy, and asked to report this to you.

On the course of peace negotiations with the Guomindang government.

Summing up the course of the peace negotiations, from which stems the possibility of the transfer by the Guomindang-ists to the CCP of the central power and all that, which is stipulated by the treaty relations between China and other countries (including communists' acceptance of diplomatic representative offices, embassies, consulates), as well as in connection with the special situation in Shanghai, Comrade Mao Zedong drew the conclusion that the CCP CC considers it possible to change the previously accepted point of view on the relations with the capitalist countries.

Whereas we formerly followed the course of non-recognition of capitalist countries and their diplomatic representative offices in China, i.e. the diplomacy of free hands, then now, with the taking of the central power into its own hands (as well as taking into account the special economic interests of the capitalist countries in Shanghai) we will be compelled to adopt the diplomacy of semi-free hands, i.e. on some occasions to enter into de facto relations with them, not allowing, however, the legal formalization of these diplomatic relations.

These relations of ours with the capitalist countries must be such that at any time we could change our point of view in the interests of the revolution.

This is still not the final decision but we are leaning toward a similar course of policy of our party in the sphere of diplomatic relations with the capitalist countries.

[I] consider it necessary to report to you some of my remarks on the related questions:

I. The Chinese comrades, both in the sphere of military operations, and in the sphere of peace negotiations, are too optimistically inclined. This concerns not only the Politburo but also other leading comrades, in particular the secretary of the bureau of the CC for Central China Cde. Yao Raoshi holds this position. He also stated that the Yangzi will be crossed without particular difficulties. Generals Liu Bocheng and Chen Yi have the same point of view.

In connection with the set conviction among the leading communists with regard to the success of the peace negotiations, the crossing of the Yangzi and the

capture of Nanjing, Shanghai and Hankou without a battle, by the Beiping [Beijing] scenario, [I am] drawing your attention to some facts of the behavior of the Guomindang government and the command:

1. The Guomindang-ists are conducting intensive work to create defenses along the entire southern bank of the Yangzi, and to a great depth. Big and small steelconcrete defenses with appropriate garrisons are being constructed. Mobilization into the army and mandatory requisition of goods are being carried out.
2. All the mouths of the rivers that flow into the Yangzi from the North are blocked so as not to allow entry into the Yangzi of even the smallest boats, which could be used when crossing for getting over [to the other side.]
3. To the depth of 150 kilometers along the front intelligence, fighting and bombardment aviation of the Guomindang-ists is conducting vigorous activities, shoots and bomb the PLA forces and military objects, particularly going after means of crossing [the river], boats, and so on.
4. On the order of general Bai Chongxi (striving to establish contacts with the CCP allegedly for deciding the question by peaceful means) railroad bridges and tunnels are being destroyed.

In particular, a big bridge near Wushenchuan across the Huanghe River at the Beiping-Hankou stretch was destroyed. From the 14 sections of the bridge with a total length of about 500 meters, 12 sections were destroyed. Also the bridge over a river near Xinan station was demolished, where all 9 sections were destroyed.

On 2 April during the period of the peace negotiations, which had already commenced in Beiping, a tunnel near Shengguang station was destroyed, inside of which two trains loaded with stones were sent toward each other. Colliding, they obstructed the tunnel, and the entry and exit to it were exploded.

In connection with the destruction of the bridges and the tunnel, carried out on the order of general Bai Chongxi, I asked comrade Zhu De how he appraises the behavior of Bai Chongxi.

Comrade Zhu De replied to this that this is one of the most reactionary and cunning Guomindang generals, there are two like these in China, said Cde. Zhu De, these are Fu Zuoyi and Bai Chongxi.

II. Representatives of the Guomindang (according to Cde. Zhou Enlai's claim) at the official consultations on peace negotiations are afraid to express their real views, relating merely the directives assigned to them. In the press [they] make

claims to the effect that [they] will not yield to the communists. However some groupings from the peace delegations at the meetings with the communists, which they secretly from each other insistently attempt [to arrange], behave themselves differently, in essence fully agreeing with the conditions put forward by the CCP.

The behavior of Li Zongren, He Yingqin, Bai Chongxi also testify that they, on the one hand, are afraid of Jiang Jieshi and the Americans and therefore officially carry out a policy of strong hand, but on the other hand secretly from each other flirt with the communists, trying to reserve with them special privileges for themselves in case of the Guomindangists' defeat.

III. The American imperialists' attempts to establish contacts with the CCP are manifested not only in the proposal on the loan made by them through Citibank.

Thus, for example, on 9 April a telegram was received from Hong Kong, from 10 American trade cartels (allegedly on [former Vice President Henry?] Wallace's recommendation) with the request to receive representatives of the South Mills for trade talks. The CCP CC did not give a reply to this telegram.

Today and in the subsequent days [acting] on Mao Zedong's proposal for more in-depth investigation of the questions related by him in the conversation, I will have meetings with comrades Zhu De, Zhou Enlai, Ren Bishi, the secretary of underground city committee of the party of Shanghai Cde. Liu Xiao.

I will report separately on the content of each conversation.