

The Chongqing Negotiations: A Political Offensive for the Peace and Democracy Policy

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Abstract

In response to changes in the domestic and international situations around the victory of the anti-Japanese war, the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Communist Party of China (CPC) adjusted their established strategic deployments in due course to cope with the new post-war domestic political and military landscapes. In face of civil war, dictatorship and secession threats, the CPC Central Committee proposed the policy of “peace, democracy and unity”, which was widely recognized by all classes of society. By signing the “October 10th Agreement” during the Chongqing Negotiations, the KMT and the CPC validated the policy of “peace, democracy and unity” and the approach to democracy proceduralization as the basic principles and direction of China’s post-war development.

Key words: Chongqing Negotiations; Democracy policy; Political offensive

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1. DISPUTE OVER THE SURRENDER-ACCEPTING RIGHT AND CHOICE OF THE KMT AND THE CPC FOR A PEACE OR WAR POLICY

As Japan announced its unconditional surrender on August 15, 1945, the Chinese people’s war against Japan

ended up with victory. Along with the victory, the most important, urgent and real political issue facing the KMT and the CPC was how to distribute the right to accept surrender. The dispute between the KMT and the CPC over the right to accept surrender was not just a military issue, but a political one as well, which would involve the move direction of the post-war China and fundamental changes in domestic political landscape.

Chiang Kai-shek gave orders to He Yingqin at the midnight: externally to issue an ultimatum to the highest commander of Japanese army, demanding a response with 24 hours to such surrender conditions as ceasing military operations, maintaining public order, protecting public and private properties, and deferring to KMT troops; while internally requiring the KMT troops to follow five orders, namely actively occupying “key points and important lines in enemy rear”, using camouflaged troops to “control key points and important lines after Japanese retreat to wait for the arrival of KMT troops”, and “being prepared for war”, with special emphasis on each war zone “to warn enemy troops under their jurisdiction not to surrender or surrender their weapons to anyone other than the military commanders that I have designated.”¹

Faced with the grave situation of military oppression and political strangulation by the KMT authorities, Zhu De, the commander in chief of the CPC army, sent a telegram to Chiang Kai-shek on the August 16th, pointing out that it was totally wrong for Chiang Kai-shek to order the Eighteenth Group Army to “stay in place and stand by”. Zhu De also made a formal proposal as to the distribution of the surrender-accepting right between the KMT and the CPC. However, the CPC’s protests, complaints and suggestions did not receive any positive response from the KMT authorities and U.S. government.

¹ Instructions on Precautions to be Taken on the Surrender of Japanese Troops in Each War Zone (No.62). *President Chiang Kai-shek’s Archives - A Brief Sketch of Events* (2011, pp.68-69). (Taiwan) National History Museum.

Mao Zedong, the Chairman of the CPC, gave his instructions that the CPC should “oppose resolutely, disapprove of and prevent a civil war” (The Documentation Research Office of the CPC Central Committee, 1993, p.65), and consider resuming negotiations between the KMT and the CPC to resolve possible armed conflicts or even civil war. At the same time, the CPC should suspend criticism against the KMT and U.S government to ease relations between the KMT and the CPC. Zhou Enlai instructed that the Chongqing Working Committee should vigorously promote the CPC’s basic policies, including “opposing civil war and dictatorship, while advocating peace and democracy” (The Documentation Research Office of the CPC Central Committee, 1998, p.629), to win support from the domestic mass and especially the democratic forces, and should work together to contain the threat of a possible large-scale civil war. As a result, the Chongqing Working Committee published a series of editorials in Xinhua Daily, pointing out that the fruits of victory in the war against Japan should belong to the people and that one-party dictatorship and secret service activities should be abolished, calling for establishing a truly democratic, united, free and happy new China. The committee also mobilized women, college faculties and students to oppose civil war and call for peace and democracy.

On the military side, the CPC adopted a hard-line policy of “giving tit for tat and fighting for every inch of land”. On the August 11, Mr. Zhu De, in his capacity as Commander-in-chief of the Eighteenth Group Army and in the name of the Yan’an headquarters, issued seven consecutive orders to the troops in the liberated areas. The CPC army was asked to deliver an ultimatum to Japanese army and its puppet armies and regimes in nearby towns and important traffic lines, demanding them to “surrender all their weapons” and “accept their deployments” within a deadline, and “if they refuse to surrender or disarm, to destroy them” and “appoint commissioners to administer the administrative affairs of each region.” (State Archives Administration, 1991, p.217)

“Chiang Kai-shek used his legitimacy to accept the surrender of enemy forces, and the enemy could only hand over major cities and traffic lines to Chiang Kai-shek. Under such circumstances, our army should change strategies. With an exception to a few locations that can still be occupied, generally we should threaten big cities and major roads with considerable forces to round up the enemy in big cities and major roads. However, we should make long-term plans by focusing our forces on the capture of small cities and rural areas to expand and consolidate the liberated areas, launching mass struggles, and training our troops to prepare for new situations. All regions should change their thinking and deployments gradually according to specific situations.” (State Archives Administration, 1991, p.243)

Up to now, the CPC had, in fact, abandoned the idea of seeking legal surrender-accepting and focusing its efforts on expanding the liberated areas as far as possible, either peacefully or by force, in order to gain a favorable position in the future domestic struggle.

During the surrender-accepting and reception process, the KMT and the CPC were at odds, sparking serious clashes and military confrontations in some areas. Due to the geographic proximity arising from the prolonged resistance in enemy’s rear areas and the operation to capture enemy-occupied counties that began in early 1945, the CPC army had captured 94 of Hebei’s 132 counties and completely controlled 82 counties by the early Japanese surrender. More than 90 percent of the towns in Shandong Province were captured. (Qin, 1945, p.318) Such a situation no longer allows the KMT to underestimate and the international community to ignore the CPC. At this point, the KMT had to choose between the CCP’s “peace policy” and the de facto “civil war policy”.

2. DETERMINATION OF THE CPC’S “PEACE, DEMOCRACY AND UNITY” POLICY

At the early victory of the anti-Japanese war, the KMT regime took the initiative and discourse power on both the political and military fronts, and had the tendency to impose a civil war on the CPC. In view of the serious political disadvantages in the country, the CPC were not given the time and opportunity to fully mobilize the entire party and the people of the country and to implement without difficulty the basic policy of establishing a new democratic state system of “independence, freedom, democracy, unity, and prosperity”, as set out in the CPC’s Seventh National Congress. Therefore, the slogan of “abolishing the KMT one-party dictatorship and establishing a democratic coalition government” (The Documentation Research Office of the CPC Central Committee, 1993, p.593) was obviously not adapted to the political situation at that time. On the premise of resolutely implementing the established basic policies set out in the Seventh National Congress, and in response to the trend of opposing civil war and calling for peace at home and abroad, it is necessary to formulate a policy that could gain the domestic general masses’ support, especially the democratic political forces, and achieve legitimacy through negotiations, so as to prevent the situation from sliding into the “first possible coalition government quagmire, or failure in the civil war launched by the KMT.” (p.308)

At the second meeting of the First Plenary Session of the CPC’s Seventh Central Committee on August 9, Mao Zedong defined four basic policies which were “cooperating in military operations, stopping a civil war,

centralized unification, and negotiation between the CPC and the KMT” after making an objective analysis of the current situation. On August 11, the above spirit was conveyed to the whole party. On August 13, Mao Zedong delivered a public speech in Yan’an, exposing the KMT’s conspiracy to start a civil war and clarifying to the people at home and abroad the CPC’s solemn position that it “resolutely opposes a civil war, does not approve of a civil war and wants to stop it”, will “lead the people to stop a civil war with great efforts and patience”, and “is ready to continue the KMT-CPC negotiations” on the basis of the Soviet-US-China agreement. (pp.617-618)

At the moment, the KMT authorities were playing a “two-handed policy” in response to the CPC’s appeal for peace. On one hand, the KMT authorities politically deployed reception plans painstakingly, issued appointments and took control of large and medium-sized cities. Militarily, the KMT authorities continued to snatch large numbers of KMT troops from the rear to central, northern and northeastern China with the help of U.S. forces, seizing strategic locations in preparation for a civil war. Diplomatically, the KMT authorities were eager to sign the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance and its subsidiary agreements as a bargaining chip in exchange for the Soviet Union’s approval of the KMT’s handling of the CPC issue, as long as “the CPC’s military orders and political decrees are fully vested in the Central Government, that is, following the practice of all other countries that the state laws should be observed effectively by every political party, then the government will treat the party equally. Once the government is reorganized upon the convening of a formal congress, the party may be accommodated within the Executive Council, but the government must not be called a coalition.” In other words, the KMT was in exchange for an assurance that the Soviet Union would “give all moral and material aid to the central government only, and that all aids from the Soviet government to China would be limited to the central government.” (Chin, 1981, pp.594 & 611)

On the other hand, at the instigation of Wu Dingchang, a core member of the Political Science Department, the KMT hastily raised the banner of “peace” in an attempt to enhance its political voice. Chiang Kai-shek invited Mao Zedong to Chongqing three times on August 14, 20 and 23 to discuss the state affairs and “formulate a general plan”². He published the message in major newspapers, appearing with a sincere and impatient face, in order to stand in the vantage point of taking the initiative and pursuing peaceful reunification. His aim was to buy time to prepare for war, and to force the CPC to accept the high-handed situation, so as to achieve his purpose of politically settling the unification of political decrees and military orders, or to justifiably attack the liberated areas

on the pretext that the negotiations had broken down and the CPC was to be blamed. At one point, people of all stripes, both international and domestic, such as Stalin, Weidemyer, Hu Shih, and Zhang Gan, called Yan’an and asked Mao Zedong to go to Chongqing to negotiate with Chiang Kai-shek.

In response to Chiang Kai-shek’s first open letter inviting Mao Zedong to Chongqing for negotiations, the CPC Central Committee publicly stated six demands on August 16, including two preconditions such as “in accepting the surrender of Japanese and its puppet armies and concluding all agreements and treaties after the surrender, the KMT must first consult with the CPC and reach agreements with us”, “abolish one-party dictatorship immediately, convene a meeting of all parties, establish a democratic coalition government, and recognize the legitimacy of the border regimes in the liberated areas and of the CPC Army” (*Liberation Daily*, 1945, pp. 211-213.). The Committee also stated that, only after Chiang Kai-shek voiced his comments on those demands, would Mao Zedong “consider a meeting with you”, in order to guide domestic and foreign public opinion on Chiang Kai-shek’s invitation to peace talks.

In response to Chiang Kai-shek’s second open letter inviting Mao Zedong to Chongqing to negotiate, the CPC Central Committee decided that Zhou Enlai would go to Chongqing to restart the negotiations and prepare to present to the KMT government the Fourteen Present Urgent Demands on August 22, including “recognizing the democratically elected government and the anti-Japanese army in the liberated areas”, “releasing patriotic political prisoners”, “recognizing the legal status of all parties”, “convening a political meeting of representatives from all parties and independents immediately to discuss urgent measures for the end of the anti-Japanese war”, ceasing political tutelage, establishing a democratic coalition Government and preparing for a national assembly with free and universal suffrage. It shows that the CPC, on the basis of its peace policy, articulated more clearly and systematically the idea of a coalition government and the means to achieve it.

On the same day, Stalin called, advising that “China cannot fight a civil war, otherwise the Chinese nation is in danger of being destroyed, and Mao Zedong should go to Chongqing for peace talks.” (The Documentation Research Office of the CPC Central Committee, 1998, pp.629-630) On the following day, the CPC Central Committee convened an enlarged meeting of the Political Bureau and conducted an objective analysis and discussion of the international and domestic political situations. On the meeting, it was decided to amend the Fourteen Present Urgent Demands into six items, which were to be implemented as the CPC’s current basic tasks and policies. The meeting made a preliminary decision to send Mao Zedong to Chongqing to participate in the

² The Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek - A Sketch of Events (62), p.273.

negotiations, and with this decision in mind, various motions such as the work of the main leaders of the Central Committee and the adjustment of the struggle strategy during the period were deployed.

On August 25, the Political Bureau and Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee formally made the important decision for Mao Zedong to represent the CPC Central Committee in Chongqing for negotiations. The aforementioned “Six Present Urgent Demands” were immediately published in the form of the “Declaration of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Current Situation”, which formally proposed the policy of “peace, democracy and unity”, systematically and completely expressing the CPC’s solemn position, political ideas and approach to resolve the disputes between the KMT and the CPC in political ways and to seek peace, democracy and unity in the post-war China. The CPC defined the “Six Present Urgent Demands” as the basis for the CPC’s policy in the Chongqing negotiations. On the following day, the Political Bureau continued to discuss and refine its negotiating strategies, deciding to make necessary concessions in terms of territory, the number of PLA forces and currency in the liberated areas. The Bureau was of the view that, “without such concessions, we will not be able to break the KMT’s civil war conspiracy, gain political initiative, win the sympathy of international public opinion and the centrists at home, or obtain in return our Party’s legitimate status and a peaceful situation”, “under internal and external pressure, it is possible that after negotiations, the (KMT) will conditionally recognize the status of our party and our party will conditionally recognize the status of the KMT, resulting in a new phase of cooperation between the two parties (plus the Democratic League, etc.) and peaceful development.” However, while making concessions, the Bureau insisted on not harming fundamental interests, and asked the troops, regarding some important transportation routes, to “control all that can be controlled even if it is temporary, while at the same time occupying as many rural areas and small towns as possible with necessary forces” under the strategy of “I will oppose Chiang if he opposes me, and stop if Chiang stops in order to achieve unity through fighting in justifiable, beneficial and balanced ways.” (Mao, 1991, pp.1153-1154) The CPC committees in all regions were asked not to abandon their vigilance against Chiang Kai-shek because of the negotiations.

Up to now, the CPC’s post-war policy for “peace, democracy and unity” and its implementation strategies were developed and deployed, winning a brief period of peace for the post-war China and a practical opportunity for China’s democracy process. As the CPC pushed forward its peace and democracy policy, the KMT would pay the price for its own stubborn positions, rigid policies and arrogant attitudes, becoming politically helpless and losing the initiative step by step.

3. THE CHONGQING NEGOTIATIONS: A CONFIRMATION OF THE DOMESTIC CONSENSUS ON “PEACE, DEMOCRACY AND UNITY”

On the afternoon of August 28, 1945, a delegation comprising Mr. Mao Zedong, Mr. Zhou Enlai, and Mr. Wang Ruofei, accompanied by Mr. Hurley and Mr. Zhang Zhizhong, flew from Yan’an to Chongqing. The KMT-CPC negotiations lasted 43 days from October 29 until the signing of the October 10 Agreement by representatives of both parties on October 10. Depending on the issues and processes involved in the negotiations, it can be broadly divided into three stages: exchange of views, specific negotiations and signing of agreements.

Stage one: exchange of views (August 29 to September 3). During this stage, the leaders of both parties held meetings to establish the principles of negotiations; representatives from both parties exchanged views freely on the necessity, principles, guidelines, procedures and content of the negotiations. On the first day of the negotiations, Chiang Kai-shek began by claiming “there is no civil war in China” in an attempt to deny the legitimacy of the CPC army. Mao Zedong instantly refuted it by citing numerous facts from the ten-year civil war and the war against Japan: “it is a deception to say that there was no civil war in China.” (The Documentation Research Office of the CPC Central Committee, 1993, p.17) The KMT disagreed in their hearts and insisted that the attack on the CPC forces was a “bandit expedition” to the extent that, on August 29, September 17 and October 13, He Yingqin and Chiang Kai-shek secretly ordered the various war zones to publish the “Bandit Expedition Manual” formulated by Chiang Kai-shek in 1933 when he attacked the Red Army, and acted accordingly, but they verbally had to admit the concept of “civil war.” Chiang Kai-shek laid down three principles for the representatives of the KMT side in response to the six demands of the CPC’s Public Declaration on the Present State of Affairs. This set the tone for the negotiations that the KMT side wanted and their outcome.

On August 30, Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai drafted and intended to submit eleven proposals for the Chongqing Negotiations to the KMT side at an appropriate time, stating the CPC’s position and the direction of the negotiations in order to test the KMT side’s attitude and obtain a counterproposal from KMT early.

On September 2, Mao Zedong, relying on the above eleven proposals, verbally informed Wang Shijie of the CPC’s negotiation principles with regard to eight basic issues, including political conference, national assembly, freedom, political parties, release of political prisoners, administration of the liberated areas, the CPC army, and surrender-accepting.

On September 3, Zhou Enlai and Wang Ruofei, the CPC representatives, formally presented the above eight basic

issues and eleven proposals to the KMT representatives. On the next day, Chiang Kai-shek gave his four “Key Points for Negotiation with the CPC” to the KMT representatives. Chiang Kai-shek had other plans; but as long as he put the party political conference on the negotiation agenda, even the best-laid plans would not help.

Stage two: concrete negotiations (September 4 to October 5). During this stage, representatives from both parties negotiated on specific issues under the framework of Chiang Kai-shek’s “Three Principles” and “Four Points” mentioned above and Mao Zedong’s “Eight Principles” and on the basis of the CPC’s “Eleven Principles.” Zhou Enlai and Wang Ruofei held 12 difficult negotiations with Zhang Qun, Shao Lizi, Zhang Zhizhong, Zhang Licang, Ye Chusheng and other KMT representatives as well as some democratic figures at No. 101 and 103 Deanli on Zhongshan Fourth Road and the National Council location within 32 days. However, due to the KMT’s insistence on not recognizing the liberated areas and its regime, and its insistence that the CPC army could only be organized into 12 divisions, the two parties ultimately failed to reach an agreement on the army and the liberated areas.

Stage three: conclusion and signing of the agreement (October 6 to October 10). Through the Chongqing Negotiations, both parties reach an agreement on the peaceful nation-founding guideline, political consultative conference, national assembly (postponed, with the existing deputies valid but requiring additional quotas), party legitimacy and political democratization, army nationalization, equal party cooperation and other issues. All these efforts together pushed and determined the inevitable signature by both the KMT and CPC on this unsatisfactory negotiation outcome. On October 10, Wang Shijie, Zhang Qun, Zhang Zhizhong, Shao Lizi, Zhou Enlai, and Wang Ruofei on behalf of both parties signed in turn on the text of the Minutes of Talks between the KMT and CPC Representatives (also known as the “October 10 Agreement”) drafted by Zhou Enlai, in the Guiyuan guest room at No. 107 Zhongshan Fourth Road. The next day, MAO Zedong and Wang Ruofei, accompanied by Zhang Zhizhong, flew back to Yan ‘an.

In order to cooperate with the Chongqing Negotiations, Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai seized every spare moment to visit people from all factions of the KMT, the middle class, centrists, cultural, educational, scientific and technological circles and friends, political councilors in Chongqing, representatives of foreign missions in China and private citizens, and even ordinary soldiers of the U.S. Army, to explain the CPC’s peace, democracy and unity policy, to listen to their opinions and suggestions, and to strive for their understanding and support. All this work and its achievements made it possible for the CPC’s policy ideas to begin to spread and win the hearts and minds of the people in the KMT ruling areas. This exerted tremendous pressure on the KMT authorities

and contributing to a large extent to the success of the Chongqing Negotiations.

CONCLUSION

In the Chongqing Negotiations, by forcing the KMT to state that it would “cooperate with the CPC for a long period of time and resolutely avoid a civil war”, the CPC had the KMT acknowledge the peace and democracy policy. By forcing the KMT to accept the concept of “civil war”, it made the KMT difficult to establish its legitimate rule and enabled the CPC to achieve its key objective of avoiding immediate outbreak of a civil war and avoiding its political passivity and illegitimacy. In addition, the postponement of the national assembly created a tendency for the KMT to change from being politically active to being politically passive. While the failure to reach an agreement on the CPC army and the liberated areas might appear to be a failure on the part of the CPC and a failure to achieve its fundamental purpose of the negotiations, on the contrary, it kept the status quo intact, leaving the CPC army and the liberated areas intact. In fact, it proved that the CPC’s party conference program was workable, recognized the new procedural model for achieving democracy in China that Mao Zedong proposed a year earlier after a tortuous process, and validated the basic approach to a coalition government strategy. From long-term vision and the perspective of regime legitimacy, this was the biggest gain the CPC made in the Chongqing Negotiations, which revitalized its democratic quest and united front work in its entirety, thus radically reversing its political disadvantage. Thus, from the postwar political and strategic situations of the KMT and the CPC, the Chongqing Negotiations ended up with a total defeat for Chiang Kai-shek and a total victory for the CPC.

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