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Memorandum of Conversation of Soviet Ambassador Roshchin with Deputy Chairman Zhu De on 24 October 1949

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Summary:
Conversation between Soviet Ambassador Roshchin and Commander of the Chinese People's Liberation Army Zhu De. Zhu De notes that PLA progress through Southern China is meeting little resistance, although it is slowed by the lack of available gasoline. De puts forth his opinion that Chinese success in Xinjiang will depend on mechanized agricultural aid from the Soviets.

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Memorandum of Conversation

of USSR Ambassador in China Com. N. V. ROSHCHIN with deputy chairman of the People’s
Government of China and the Commander in Chief of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) ZHU DE
on 24 October 1949

On 24 October at 1600 the Ambassador paid an official visit to the deputy chairman of the People’s
Government of China and Commander in Chief of the PLA, Zhu De in the reception hall
Yinyangtang in Zhongnanhai [the Chinese leadership compound].

After questions of a protocol nature between the Ambassador and Zhu De there was a friendly talk
in the course of which Zhu De stated the following.

I. Military operations on the fronts of the Chinese civil war are developing in a fully satisfactory
manner. If they continue thus, then Sichuan province will be completely liberated towards the end
of this year. In Sichuan among the local militarists there is a strong tendency to come over to the
PLA and practical steps are being taken in this direction. The PLA’s progress in Southeast China
will be determined by the average hourly speed at which the PLA infantry units march, for there is
no serious resistance. The PLA troops operating in Southern China are not able to use auto
transport, because there is little gas. The GMD [Guomindang; Kuomintang; KMT] successfully
removed all fuel to Hainan Island in advance and the PLA transport lacks “trophy” gasoline.

II. The preparation of new PLA units, in particular anti-aircraft units, is going forward in Manchuria
and Northern China and soon five anti-aircraft regiments will be sent into the central and southern
ports of China – Shanghai, Nanking, Hanzhou and others. In this matter, as in the PLA’s
movement into Xinjiang, the PLA command received large-scale, valuable aid from Soviet
comrades.

III. Regarding further aid to China by the Soviet side, Zhu De especially mentioned Xinjiang, where
in his words PLA units will settle right away to provide for themselves in order to be fully self-
supporting and not harm the interests of the local Muslim population in Xinjiang. In order to help the
PLA to successfully carry out its spring seeding, in Zhu De’s opinion, the Chinese government
should agree with the Soviet government about sending the PLA powerful tractors, hoes, and other
agricultural tools and machines, so that the army, on one hand, can clearly demonstrate to the local
population the advantages of machine agriculture and, on the other hand, can feed itself. This will
also be a valuable contribution to Sino-Soviet friendship and a demonstration of USSR help to
China. Zhu De warned the Ambassador several times that his suggestion was personal in nature
and that the government had not discussed this issue.

IV. Regarding the General Staff Zhu De stated that the General Staff was an extremely important
institution, completely new in Chinese conditions. Presently General Xu Xiangqian, the Chief of the
General Staff, an old CCP [Chinese Communist Party] military worker, who before the Japanese
invasion commanded troops of the fourth direction of the Chinese soviet [council] districts, is
seriously sick and his functions are carried out by Nie Rongzhen. At present the PLA officers’ corps
does not have enough generals and officers to work in a General Staff since the war is continuing
and victory is decided at the front, from where it is presently premature to recall generals and
officers to work in a General Staff. However, soon the PLA Command will be obliged to bring back
cadres for the General Staff from the fronts.

The conversation with Zhu De continued for one-and-a-half hours and Embassy Advisor S. L
Tikhvinskii and the Head of the [Chinese] Foreign Ministry Yan Baohang. The conversation was
interpreted by Embassy Advisor S. L. Tikhvinskii.
USSR Ambassador in China N. Roshchin.