

## On Sino-Soviet Cultural Association and the Second KMT-CPC Cooperation

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### Abstract

During the anti-Japanese war, “allying with Soviet” was the most important international relation and “cooperating with Chinese Communist Party” was the most important domestic political relation to Chinese national government and Kuomintang. Taking into account the special relationship between Soviet Union and Chinese Communist Party, the two were interrelated, inter-influenced and promoted each other. Sino-Soviet Cultural Association not only played a positive role in Sino-Soviet diplomacy, but also had a significant impact in promoting the legal status of CPC, Wannan Incident, Chongqing Negotiation and other sensitive issues concerning the establishment of second KMT-CPC cooperation in the critical period.

**Key words:** Sino-Soviet cultural association; Ally with Soviet Union; Second KMT-CPC cooperation

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### INTRODUCTION

After the “September 18” incident, the failure of mediation by the League of Nations marked Jiang Jieshi’s disillusion to the US-British; In early 1935 North China

Incident broke out, Jiang Jieshi’s hope of compromising with Japan was dashed; in October 1935, the Red Army arrived in northern Shaanxi, and Jiang Jieshi’s attempt of military solution to the CPC problem also fell through. Internal and external difficulties forced Jiang Jieshi to turn to Soviet Union which was also under the Japanese threat and regarded as the backstage supporter of CPC. In the triangular relations among China, Japan and Soviet Union at the time, China and Soviet Union had the aspiration to form an alliance, but were reluctant to openly break with Japan. Meanwhile, due to historical grievances, China and Soviet Union had suspicion and temptation to each other. Therefore, Sino-Soviet diplomacy had to take a strategy of “cooperating diplomatically in the name of holding cultural activities”. On October 25, Sino-Soviet Cultural Association was established, which was the specific implementation of this strategy. Facts have proved that Sino-Soviet Cultural Association has worked as a double-sided adhesive on the issues of “allying with Soviet” and “cooperating with CPC”.

### 1. SINO-SOVIET CULTURAL ASSOCIATION BROKE THE ICE ON THE ISSUE OF LEGAL STATUS OF CPC

The legal status of CPC is a sensitive issue to KMT and CPC. KMT has always concerned itself as the leader, and regarded the second KMT-CPC cooperation as a process of “demonstrating sincerity” and “accepting surrender”, “did not, and have no intention to positively recognize the legitimacy of CPC.” (Yun, 1996) In fact, after Xi’an Incident and before Lugou Bridge Incident, several talks between CPC and MKT could only be held in private. To CPC, its legitimacy was a principle matter concerning its status in the united front, concerning whether KMT-CPC cooperation could be reached and how to maintain the cooperation.

On July 7, 1937, Lugou Bridge Incident broke out, forcing Jiang Jieshi to accelerate the process of negotiation between the two parties. On August 9, with Jiang Jieshi's invitation, Zhou Enlai, Zhu De and Ye Jianying secretly went to Nanjing to participate in the national defense conference held by KMT government. One day in mid-August, a tea party was held in the name of Sino-Soviet Cultural Association at the home of Liang Hanco, Secretary-General of KMT Legislature. In addition to the relevant personnel of Soviet Cultural Association, there were also Shen Junru from National Salvation Association and Zhou Enlai (Qian, 1985). This tea party was quite thought-provoking. First of all, CPC was arranged to take the "first show" in KMT-controlled area as a cultural community in Sino-Soviet Cultural Association. This was consistent with KMT's attitude who later invited the CPC leaders as an important cultural group or economic group to participate in National Political Assembly, rather than a representative of political parties. Even so, this was the first time that CPC acted openly and legally in KMT-controlled area after the breakdown of the first KMT-CPC cooperation, which showed KMT's tacit acceptance of the legitimacy of CPC and had a self-evident significance for promoting the second KMT-CPC cooperation. Secondly, members of Sino-Soviet Cultural Association were mostly from KMT leadership, having a clear Kuomintang official color. The Soviet counter party of Sino-Soviet Cultural Association was Soviet Foreign Cultural Association which was controlled by the CPSU Central Political Bureau. Therefore, many views of KMT government which were not appropriate to express in public were passed to the Soviet side through Sino-Soviet Cultural Association. CPC delegation's "first show" in Sino-Soviet Cultural Association could be considered as KMT's show of cooperation with CPC, and received an immediate effect. On August 21, *Sino-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact* long awaited by Jiang Jieshi was signed, marking the formal involvement of Soviet Union in the Chinese Anti-Japanese War. Thirdly, at this tea party, Zhou Enlai firstly met Shen Junru of National Salvation Association. On November 23, 1936, Nanjing national government arrested Shen Junru and other 6 leaders of National Salvation Association on the charge of "wantonly spread rumors in the name of national salvation... colluded with red bandits, instigated class struggle and advocated to overthrow the national government" (Shanghai Public Security Bureau's Declaration, para.6, 1936). On April 3, 1937, the national government delivered an indictment to Shen Jun Ru, etc.. On April 12, CPC published *CPC Central Committee's Declaration for Immediate Release of Shen Junru, Other Six People and All Patriotic Political Prisoners*. The combat between CPC and KMT on the issue of National Salvation Association represented the two parties' different attitudes to the united front. Since National Salvation Association had great influences in the national anti-Japanese movement, Shen Junru and Zhou Enlai's presence at Sino-Soviet Cultural Association

showed that KMT stated in front of people that it had reached a compromise with CPC on the United Front.

## 2. SINO-SOVIET CULTURAL ASSOCIATION BECAME AN IMPORTANT LINK TO MAINTAIN SINO-SOVIET DIPLOMACY AND KMT-CPC COOPERATION IN THE SPECIAL PERIOD

In the early days of the war, Soviet Union was the country which gave the largest aid to China, and was the promoter of KMT-CPC cooperation. To a certain extent, it can be said that the stable Sino-Soviet relation was the prerequisite and guarantee of KMT-CPC cooperation. But Sino-Soviet relation was not always so easy, and the first major crisis was the signature of *Soviet-Germany Treaty*.

On August 23, 1939, *Soviet-Germany Non-Aggression Pact* was signed, which not only caused a public outcry in the world, but also had a tremendous negative impact on the KMT and CPC. On August 27, Sun Ke, the president of Sino-Soviet Cultural Association visited Moscow. He said after the signature of *Soviet-Germany Treaty*, "there are rumors that Soviet Union and Japan will sign a non-aggression treaty", so "China's strength to fight against the Japanese will be weakened" (Li, 2002). This indicated that KMT government was very worried that the change in Soviet-Germany relation would cause a chain of reactions to Soviet-Japan relation. In order to eliminate the public doubt and aversion to Soviet Union, on November 7, *Sino-Soviet Culture*, the official magazine of Sino-Soviet Cultural Association released *A Special Issue to Commemorate the 22<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of the Soviet October Revolution*. Sun Ke, Chen Lifu, Feng Yuxiang, Shao Lizi, Li Jishen, Chen Cheng, Liang Hanco, Zhang Qun, Lü Chao, Wu Dingchang, Zhang Fakui, Zhang Chong, Mao Zedong, Zhu De, Wu Yuzhang, Pan Zinian and Zhang Ximan, etc. published congratulations to it. So many CPC and KMT politicians celebrated for the same incident in the same manganese during the anti-Japanese war, which was a rare case. What's the most notable was Mao Zedong's *The Consistency of Soviet's Interests and the Interests of Humanity* at the invitation of Sino-Soviet Cultural Association, which was Mao Zedong's first published article in KMT-ruled areas other than in CPC's own newspapers and journals. *Sino-Soviet Culture* subsequently also published Sun Ke's defense speech to *Soviet-Germany Treaty*,

The Soviet Union finds that it's impossible to seek peace with Britain and France, and is under the threat of Germany. Germany is also threatened by Britain and France, and fears to be further threatened by Soviet if it allies with British and French. Soviet Union, like Germany believes that the other is the source of threat, so signed a non-aggression treaty with the other to reach a mutual understanding. (Sun, 1940)

CPC and KMT maintained close cooperation to preserve the image of Soviet Union, which smoothly

resolved a serious diplomatic crisis of confidence. As long as KMT and CPC stayed the same on the issue of allying with Soviet Union, they still had a basis to cooperate.

### 3. SINO-SOVIET CULTURAL ASSOCIATION CONTRIBUTED FOR RESOLVING THE LARGEST CONFLICT BETWEEN CPC AND KMT - WANNAN INCIDENT

Due to the conflict between the fundamental interests of KMT and CPC, the KMT-CPC cooperation was only an expedient under war situation. Therefore, the two sides had frictions during the cooperation and it can even be said that friction was an essential part of the cooperation. During the war, the most intense conflict between the two sides was nothing else than Wannan Incident. On January 6, 1941, Wannan Incident broke out. KMT and CPC's relationship was at the edge of felling down and their relationships with Soviet Union were also in a slump. For Soviet Union's misjudgment and gesticulation on Wannan Incident, Mao Zedong unprecedentedly called to Zhou Enlai, requesting him to question the Soviet military adviser Chuikov, "Ye Ting and Xiang Ying were captured and our army was annihilated. We want to hear Chuikov's advice on Jiang Jieshi's lawless act." (Yang, 1992, p.405) It turns out that Wannan Incident not only affected the national government's diplomatic relation with Soviet Union, but also had a significant impact on CPC's relation with Soviet Union.

In this grim situation, Sino-Soviet Cultural Association played an important role in stabilizing the public and maintaining the KMT-CPC cooperation. On June 17, 1941, to commemorate the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Gorky's death, *Xinhua Daily* (north edition) published an editorial entitled *One who does not Lift His Sword will Die in Shame*. On June 18 Sino-Soviet Cultural Association held an anniversary party, and Zhou Enlai, Dong Biwu, Liang Hancuo, Feng Yuxiang, Shen Junru, Guo Moruo, Zhang Ximan, Lao She, Wang Kunlun and Cao Jinghua, etc. attended. Liang Hancuo made a speech on behalf of Sun Ke - *Why should We Commemorate Gorky* (president's statement), and Guo Moruo gave a speech—*Living Model*. The two speeches were published in the "Special for the 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Gorky's Death" of *Sino-Soviet Culture*. On the same day, Yan'an held a general assembly and exhibitions to commemorate the anniversary. Xiao San gave a report entitled *On Gorky's Love and Hatred*, which was published in that day's *Liberation Daily*. Commemoration for Gorky was supposed to be a conventional cultural activity during the war, but in 1941 it became the most solemn one under KMT and CPC's joint attention.

In November 1941, cultural organizations in Chongqing jointly launched the celebration of "Guo Moruo's 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday and the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of His Creative Life". For the commemoration, KMT and CPC gave high degree of concerns and echoed each other.

On November 16, *Xinhua Daily* published Zhou Enlai's monograph *I'm going to Say* on the front page, published the *Special for the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Mr. Guo Moruo's Creative Life*, and a special report "Literary and Art Circles Commemorated the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Guo Moruo's Creation." On November 17, *Xinhua Daily* published a documentary report "Brilliant Twenty-Five Years of Poetic Writing – A Record of the Tea Party for the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Mr. Guo Moruo's Creation". *Central Daily* published an interview feature "Birthday of Creation – Culture Circle's Gathering for Celebrating Guo Moruo's 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday". In addition, the KMT Chongqing newspaper *Sao Dang Bao* reported "Literary Anecdote – Cultural Circle in the Provisional Capital Congratulated Guo Moruo". CPC Yan'an *Liberation Daily* also published a report "Mr. Guo Moruo's 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday – Yan'an Cultural Circle Gathered to Celebrate". Throughout the commemorations it was not difficult to find that, this KMT-CPC cultural cooperation was the most worth recording incident in the Chinese literary and art circles anti-Japanese united front after Wannan Incident.

After Wannan Incident KMT and CPC had conflicts in a number of political occasions and major issues, but they were quite cooperative in a series of cultural activities organized by Sino-Soviet Cultural Association. As long as the Soviet Union banner did not fall, its identity as the mediator between KMT and CPC was still recognized. The joint commemoration to Guo Moruo's birthday proved that the relationship between the two parties was getting warmer from the freezing point.

### 4. SINO-SOVIET CULTURAL ASSOCIATION MADE EFFORTS IN CHONGQING NEGOTIATION TO AVOID RUPTURE OF THE KMT-CPC COOPERATION

Because Soviet Union played political seesaw between KMT and CPC by its own national interests, CPC and CPSU had also contradictions and conflicts from time to time, and the most serious one was Stalin's so-called "do not revolution".

As early as on December 20, 1944, Mao Zedong wrote comments on Dong Biwu's report concerning the work to the rear area, "we must take on China in this war." (Yang, 2013) From April 23 to June 11, 1945, CPC held the 7<sup>th</sup> National Congress, which further showed its determination to overthrow KMT's dictatorship and establish a joint government after the war. At the conference Mao Zedong predicted that Soviet Union would give full support to CPC after the war. But contrary to the expectation of CPC, on August 14 *Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance* was signed, by which Soviet Union and the National Government reached a political deal. In the treaty, KMT recognized Soviet's privileges provided by *Yalta Agreement* in China, and Stalin

promised to the Chinese negotiators, “all assistances will be given to the Chinese National Government”, which was written in the attachment of the treaty, “the Soviet government agreed to provide moral assistance, munitions and other supplies to China. These aids are fully given to the Chinese Central Government, namely the National Government” (Second Historical Archives of China, para.5, 1999). Convinced of acquiring the support of Soviet Union, Jiang Jieshi invited Mao Zedong to Chongqing to discuss the national policy on the same day when the treaty was signed. On August 20, Jiang Jieshi sent another telegraph to urge Mao Zedong’s to Chongqing, Stalin also requested Mao Zedong’s visit, even indicating in the telegraph that “do not combat Jiang Jieshi. If a civil war is started, there is a risk of destruction of the nation.” (Mao, 1999) According to Mao Zedong’s Russian translator Shi Zhe, Stalin’s telegraph “caused great displeasure of Chairman Mao, he was very angry.” Years later, Mao Zedong was still reluctant to let go of this history, and on July 22, 1958 mentioned four times in the conversation with the Soviet Ambassador Eugene that Stalin “did not guard our revolution in the most critical moment” (Yang, 1997, p.217).

On August 28, 1945 Mao Zedong arrived Chongqing. In the afternoon of September 1, Sino-Soviet Cultural Association organized a cocktail reception to celebrate the signature of *Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance* and welcomed the new Soviet ambassador to China. Mao Zedong was invited to attend the reception. The party was presided by Sun Ke, the president of Sino-Soviet Culture Association. Chen Lifu, Shao Lizi, Song Qingling, Feng Yuxiang, Tan Zhen, Liang Hancan, Guo Moruo, Shen Junru, Li Dequan, Fu Sinian, Wang Kunlun, Xu Baoju, Mao Dun, Hou Wailu, Zhang Ximan, Yang Hansheng, Cao Mengjun and other key members of Sino-Soviet cultural Association, and about three to four hundred representatives from various sectors in Chongqing attended the reception.

The reception was quite noteworthy. First of all, it was the first time that Mao Zedong met KMT leaders since 1924. Before the reception CPC delegation called the Sino-Soviet Cultural Association secretariat for additional invitations, which were unprecedented (Yu, 1984). After the reception, Zhou Enlai instructed Xia Yan to write a special report in *Xinhua Daily* “Sino-Soviet Cultural Association Held a Grand Meeting Yesterday to Celebrate the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Alliance - Comrade Mao Zedong Arrived the Meeting in Enthusiastic Cheers and Made Historic Handshake with All Parties in Friendship”. This showed that CPC attached great importance to the cocktail party, and took the chance to show to the public CPC’s last effort to maintain the KMT-CPC cooperation. Secondly, at the reception Mao Zedong met Soviet Ambassador Petrov and military officer Luo Shen. This was the first time he met the representatives of the Soviet government, and he took this opportunity to convey some important information to Stalin. It’s clear that Mao Zedong attended the reception of celebrating the signing of Sino-Soviet Treaty in order to

show CPC’s restraint on the CPC-Soviet relation and KMT-Soviet relation, and it was this restraint which maintained the KMT-CPC cooperation that had gone bad.

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## CONCLUSION

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Sino-Soviet Cultural Association was founded in October 1935, and was eventually replaced by Sino-Soviet Friendship Association in July 1949. It lasted for nearly 14 years and was the most active overseas cultural organization during the war. Its members included political dignitaries and cultural elites of the two parties as well as the Soviet Embassy staff. Its official magazine *Sino-Soviet Culture* released Vol. 1, No. 1 issue on May 15, 1936 to Vol. 20 No. 5 issue on May 1, 1949 without any interruption, which was a rare case among many publications during the war. It served as a platform to conduct cultural exchanges and the two parties to carry out communications and cooperation with Soviet Union. Thus, Sino-Soviet Cultural Association had positive impacts not only on cultural exchanges and the Sino-Soviet diplomacy, but also the second KMT-CPC cooperation during the war.

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