

From Pro-Communist To Anti-Communist: A Study on the Relationship between Sheng Shicai and the Kuomintang and The Communist Party Of China

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Abstract: When Shengshicai studied in Japan, he had contact with communist books, and had a pro-Soviet pro-Communist tendency in mind. However, due to the strong involvement of the Soviet Union and the Comintern, the Communist Party rejected Sheng's letter to Wang Ming proposing to join the Communist Party of China. By the time the Communist Party extended an olive branch two years later, Mr. Sheng had changed his mind and declined the request. Although Shengshicai refused to join the Communist Party of China, he secretly joined the Soviet Party at this time in order to consolidate his rule in Xinjiang. Although Shengshicai refused to join the Communist Party of China, he secretly joined the Soviet Party at this time in order to consolidate his rule in Xinjiang and enlist the help of the Soviet Union. In 1942, the Soviet War broke out, Shengshicai and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union deteriorated, and the Communist Party of China is also a constant conflict, and finally under the lure of Chiang Kai-shek, completely Shengshicai's several twists and turns in joining the party were rooted in the interest game among the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and finally under the lure of Chiang Kai-shek, completely took refuge in the Kuomintang regime. Shengshicai's several twists and turns in joining the party were rooted in the interest game among the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the Communist Party of China and the Kuomintang, as well as Shengshicai's consideration of maintaining the autocratic rule in Xinjiang.

Keywords: Shengshicai; The Soviet union. The Chinese Communist Party; The communist international

I. Pro-Soviet Communist Party, Apply For Membership in the Communist Party Of China

In 1917, Sheng Shicai went to Japan to study, during which time he was exposed to communist books and at one point had pro-Soviet and pro-communist tendencies in his thinking. After returning from his studies, Sheng Shicai served in the command of the National Revolutionary Army and later joined the Jin Shuren regime in Xinjiang. After the September 18 Incident in 1931, Sheng Shicai opposed the Japanese invasion and agreed with the Communist Party's anti-Japanese ideas, and was very dissatisfied with the "non-resistance policy" of Chiang Kai-shek's regime. In his opinion, Chiang Kai-shek was too narrow-minded and emotional in the face of national justice to be the leader of the nation. [1]These became the basis of Sheng Shicai's pro-communist and pro-Soviet ideology.

In 1933, after the April 12 coup in Xinjiang, the Jinshuren regime was overthrown and Sheng Shicai was elected as the provisional governor of Xinjiang. In June of the same year, Sheng Shicai shot Chen Zhong and Li Xiaotian and forced Liu Wenlong, the then chairman of Xinjiang province, to resign in the name of "conspiracy to commit treason", and supported the aged Zhu Ruiqi to become the provincial chairman, taking control of the actual ruling power of Xinjiang himself. At this point the National Government became suspicious of Sheng Shicai and his appointment as Xinjiang provincial chairman was never given. Although Sheng Shicai held power, he could only control the area around the provincial capital. Most of Xinjiang was occupied by the Gansu warlord Ma Zhongying and Zhang Peiyuan of Yili, and Sheng Shicai was the weakest compared to the two. [2]The Nanking government also refrained from interfering with the regime in Xinjiang, using these three forces to balance each other out. But with the union of Ma Zhongying and Zhang Peiyuan, this balance was broken. The Soviet Union had no choice but to seek the help of Sheng Shicai. The Soviet Union also wanted a stable pro-Soviet regime at the border, especially after the Hami Incident in 1931, when the British, Germans and Japanese began to eye the Xinjiang region, causing concern to the Soviet government. The Soviet government therefore decided to cooperate with Sheng Shicai and sent the Soviet Red Army to Xinjiang to eliminate Ma Zhongying and Zhang Peiyuan, helping to stabilise Sheng Shicai's regime.

With the alliance with the Soviet Union, Sheng Shicai's relationship with the Chinese Communist Party also became closer. In March 1936, Sheng Shicai wrote to Wang Ming, even expressing his desire to join the Chinese Communist Party. In the letter, he sincerely said to Wang Ming: "In 1929 I wrote to Mr. Song Fuyao requesting that I be introduced to the Chinese Communist Party, but unfortunately Mr. Song was arrested and imprisoned in Japan and I was not able to fulfil my wish. However, although I was not able to join the Communist Party at that time, my wish to join the Communist Party has never changed." [3]After learning of Sheng Shicai's letter, the CPC immediately sent Deng Fa to Xinjiang to actively carry out united front work against Sheng Shicai. In November 1937, when Wang Ming and Kang Sheng returned to Yan'an from Moscow via Xinjiang, Sheng Shicai formally asked Wang Ming to join the CPC. [3]According to the spirit of the Wajaobao Conference of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, the CPC was more than willing to accept Sheng Shicai, but at this time it was strongly intervened by the Communist International and the Soviet government. The Third International and Stalin considered that although Sheng Shicai had the qualifications to join the Party, he had delicate relations with the Kuomintang and the Communist Party in Xinjiang and it was not appropriate to allow him to join the CPC now. As a result, the Chinese Communist Party had to politely refuse Sheng Shicai's request to join the Party.

II. Secret meeting with Stalin and joining the Communist Party of the Soviet Union

On 21 August 1937, the Nationalist Government and the Soviet Government signed a non-aggression pact and the Soviet Union began to provide assistance to China, bringing Sino-Soviet relations into a honeymoon period. Xinjiang, as the hub of Soviet aid to China, was of paramount importance, and large quantities of war materials had to be transported to the front line through Xinjiang. In August 1938, a special guest arrived in

Moscow, Sheng Shicai, who secretly visited Stalin in the name of healing his wounds, discussing with him the problems of Xinjiang, and also expressing his desire to join the Soviet Communist Party. [2]In his recollections, Sheng Shicai mentioned that he expressed his belief in Marxism-Leninism to Stalin, who agreed to his request for membership and accepted him into the Communist Party of the Soviet Union just as he was about to leave, signing the oath of the Moscow Politburo, as well as having the Party Charter and the Party card numbered 1859118.

Although Stalin agreed to Sheng Shicai's joining the Party, the Soviet government did not make the matter public. In Stalin's view, Sheng Shicai's membership of the Soviet Communist Party, if made public, might cause resentment among the Kuomintang and affect Soviet interests in Xinjiang. [4]It was for these reasons that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union secretly accepted Sheng Shicai's request to join the Party.

Relations between Xinjiang and the Soviet government became even closer after Sheng Shicai's visit to Stalin. Sheng Shicai agreed to the Soviet Union's deployment of troops to Hami and even signed the Tin Mining Agreement with the Soviet government to the detriment of the country's rights without the knowledge of the national government in Chongqing. [2]It should be noted that at this time Sheng Shicai joined the Soviet Communist Party not out of faith in Marxism-Leninism but purely out of his own self-interest. In order to counteract the Nationalist government, Sheng Shicai needed to draw on the power of the Soviet Union. For the Soviet Union, it also had its own interests in supporting Sheng Shicai and absorbing him into the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. On the one hand, it could enhance the Soviet influence in Xinjiang and gain access to quality mineral resources, and on the other hand, it could prepare for the establishment of the Soviet regime in Xinjiang and its incorporation into the Soviet territory.

III. Lin Biao visited Sheng Shicai, who refused to join the Chinese Communist Party

On 18 December 1938, the CPC Central Committee sent Lin Biao to Urumqi to convey to Sheng Shicai the decision to accept him into the CPC. [5]P118-P119In order to avoid the intervention of the Communist International and the Soviet Union, Lin Biao wanted Sheng Shicai to keep this secret.

However Sheng Shicai's reaction was quite surprising, as he replied bluntly to Lin Biao: "No secrets should exist between me and the Soviet Union, and it would be inappropriate not to inform the Soviet government. At present I am not in a position to join the Chinese Communist Party organisation in Urumqi and carry out Party work, because the present situation in Xinjiang does not facilitate this, as it may cause discontent among the Nanking government and some backward tribes in Xinjiang, which would be harmful to the Chinese resistance." To allay Lin Biao's concerns, Sheng Shicai went on to say, "What I have said above in no way indicates that I do not accept the instructions of the CPC, and I am not now officially going through the formalities of accepting my membership in the CPC." [5]P120Sheng Shicai did not inform Lin Biao that he had previously joined the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. He politely declined the request to join the Party on the pretext that the Soviet Government and the Communist International were unaware of it.

The reason why the CCP wanted Sheng Shicai to join the party in secret was to improve relations with Sheng Shicai. With the gradual expansion of the CCP's influence in Xinjiang, Sheng Shicai was not as kind to the

CCP members in Urumqi as he used to be in order to maintain his rule in Xinjiang. He opposed the open activities of the CCP in Xinjiang and the secret organisational gatherings of the CCP in Urumqi, and even sent secret agents to monitor the every move of CCP members. Deng Fa, a representative of the CCP, protested against Sheng Shicai's anti-communist behaviour, but was then removed from his post and expelled from Xinjiang by Sheng Shicai. Deng Fa's forced departure from Xinjiang marked the deterioration of Sheng Shicai's relationship with the CCP.

After Sheng Shicai's refusal, the CPC Central Committee again reported to the Comintern in the hope of gaining Sheng Shicai's membership in the CPC, but was again refused by the Comintern and the Soviet government. on 21 May 1939, Dimitrov of the Comintern telephoned the CPC, saying that Sheng Shicai's membership was inappropriate and that he did not recommend the CPC to set up a party organisation in Xinjiang. [5]P138This instruction was given by the International after it had already known that Sheng Shicai had joined the Soviet Communist Party, purely out of the Soviet Union's national interest. In response to Chiang Kai-shek's policy of "seeking to secure the internal affairs of the country before expelling the foreigners", the Soviet government said that Soviet-Chinese governmental relations should not be affected by the struggle between the two parties, and that it could recognise that "the leadership of the Chinese revolution lies with the Kuomintang and not with the Communists" if the Chinese government did not "purge the Communists from the Soviet Union". The leadership of the Chinese revolution lies with the Kuomintang and not with the Communists". [6]Stalin's long-standing ideology of "valuing the state over the Communist Party" was aimed at keeping Japan at bay for a long time by assisting Chiang Kai-shek. If the Soviet government had allowed Sheng Shicai to join the CCP at this time, it would undoubtedly have aroused the resentment of the Kuomintang and broken the anti-Japanese national united front.

IV. Chiang Kai-shek seized the opportunity and Sheng Shicai returned to the National Government in Chongqing

Chiang Kai-shek had been very concerned about the growth of Soviet power in Xinjiang and had warned Sheng Shicai several times not to sign unilateral treaties with the Soviet government. The outbreak of the Soviet-German War in 1941 undoubtedly gave Chiang a good opportunity to recover Xinjiang.

After the outbreak of the Soviet-German War, Sheng Shicai and the Soviet government were also in constant conflict. Before World War II, the Soviet government added Xinjiang to its war preparations early on in defence against German aggression and continued to intensify its plunder of Xinjiang's resources. This was a source of discontent for Sheng Shicai, who wanted to find an opportunity to escape from Soviet control. After the outbreak of the Soviet-German War, Sheng Shicai, based on his judgement of the current situation, believed that the Soviet Union was undermined by the Soviet-German War and that the Chinese Communist Party was now too self-conscious to rely on, and that it was time to study the Three People's Principles and prepare to approach the central government. [7]The change in Sheng Shicai's thinking was partly due to the deepening conflict with the Soviet government, and partly because Sheng Shicai had begun to engage in some speculative behaviour in order to maintain his dominant position in Xinjiang.

In the autumn of 1941, Chiang Kai-shek began to strengthen his control over Xinjiang, sending Wu Zhongxin to occupy the key road, the Hexi Corridor, cutting off Sheng Shicai's links with the mainland and opening the way for the Central Army to enter Xinjiang. [4]Faced with Chiang Kai-shek's step-by-step approach, Sheng Shicai also saw Chiang's determination to regain Xinjiang. All these factors combined prompted Sheng Shicai to begin actively defecting to the Kuomintang regime.

The turning point was the "19 March Incident" in Xinjiang, when Sheng Shicai's fourth brother, Sheng Shidi, was killed at his home on 19 March 1942. Sheng Shidi was a lieutenant-general in the army and had a certain amount of influence in the military, and his strange death caused a lot of controversy in the community. [4]Sheng Shicai seized this opportunity to realise his idea of a change of government, insisting that the murder of Sheng Shidi was "jointly directed by Moscow and Yan'an", and that behind it lay a political conspiracy to overthrow his own rule in Xinjiang. To this end, Sheng Shicai also fabricated a false case of conspiracy to riot, so that he would be justified in declaring that he "could no longer continue to cooperate with the Soviet Union and the Communist Party in the future" and that he would have to change course and join the central government.

Sheng Shidi's death unveiled the anti-communist and anti-Soviet face of Sheng Shicai. Most scholars have concluded that Sheng Shidi was persecuted by Sheng Shicai. Sheng Shifei was close to the Chinese Communist Party, and he supported the pro-Soviet and pro-Communist line and opposed Sheng Shicai's "pro-Chiang, anti-Communist" line, thus causing Sheng Shicai's strong resentment. Sheng Shicai [8]killed his own brother in order to maintain his dictatorship, with the aim of undermining the power of the CCP and the Soviet government in Xinjiang and convincing Chiang of his sincerity in surrendering.

Sheng Shicai created friction and intended to use the opportunity to alienate relations with the Soviet Union and the Chinese Communist Party. Unexpectedly, this caused Stalin to become displeased and strongly demanded that officials be sent to Xinjiang to investigate. In the face of Soviet pressure, Sheng Shicai felt weak, and that if the truth was revealed, his position of dominance in Xinjiang could be shaken. Out of military pressure on the Soviet side, Sheng Shicai accelerated his defection to the Kuomintang. He immediately called the Nationalist government and requested that Zhu Shaoliang be appointed to come to Xinjiang to discuss the matter.

After receiving Sheng Shicai's telegram, Chiang Kai-shek realised that this was the best time to recover Xinjiang and immediately wrote to Sheng Shicai, asking him to meet with Zhu Shaoliang. In his letter, Chiang Kai-shek expressed his approval of Sheng Shicai and his willingness to bear all the consequences for his sake, and even addressed him affectionately as "my brother". [9]It was this letter from Chiang Kai-shek that showed Sheng Shicai the sincerity of the Kuomintang and made him feel that he had a new backer.

In July 1942, Chiang Kai-shek sent Zhu Shaoliang to Xinjiang to meet with Sheng Shicai, who was given full authority to deal with helping Sheng Shicai solve the Xinjiang issue. In September of the same year, Zhu Shaoliang signed an agreement with Sheng Shicai, deciding to establish the Xinjiang Party Department of the Kuomintang in Xinjiang and appointing Sheng Shicai as the chairman and supervising member of the Xinjiang Party Department of the Kuomintang. [2]After the agreement was signed, Sheng Shicai formally changed his tent, stating that he "supports the Central Committee and obeys the leadership of the Kuomintang." At the same time,

Sheng Shicai turned his back on the Soviet Union and the Chinese Communist Party, demanding that the Soviet government withdraw all experts and advisers and arresting Chinese Communist Party members in Xinjiang, with Chen Tanqiu, Mao Zemin and a number of other senior Chinese Communist Party cadres being killed one after another.

V. Conclusion

Throughout, the relationship between Sheng Shicai and the Communist Party went through a tortuous process of change. At the beginning of the war, Sheng Shicai chose to be pro-Soviet and pro-Communist, partly because he wanted to rely on Soviet power to consolidate his regime in Xinjiang, and partly because he was patriotic and needed to establish a national united front with the Communist Party of China against the Japanese. But Sheng Shicai himself was an ambitious warlord whose pro-Soviet and pro-communist interests were at stake. He needed the military power of the Soviet Union to counterbalance the Nationalist government and maintain its dictatorial rule in Xinjiang, and he also needed the progressive ideas of the CPC to win the support of the local masses. As the influence of the Soviet Union and the Chinese Communist Party continued to expand in Xinjiang, coupled with the Soviet government's unrestrained plundering of Xinjiang's resources, Sheng Shicai became outwardly pro-Soviet and pro-Communist, but in fact had secretly become anti-Soviet and anti-communist. After the outbreak of the Soviet-German War, Sheng Shicai even took this as an opportunity to change his position directly under the coercion of Chiang Kai-shek and defected to the Nationalist government, parting ways with the Chinese Communist Party completely.

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