

January 22, 1944

Stalin's Conversation with Choibalsan

Citation:

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Summary:

Conversations between Joseph Stalin and Khorloogiin Choibalsan about Mongolia and efforts to defend against possible Chinese attacks during World War II.

Original Language:

Mongolian

Contents:

Translation - English

Choibalsan departed Ulaanbaatar by car on January 7, 1944 and arrived at the Moscow train station on the 14th of the same month... On [January 22, 1944] Choibalsan and Ivanov met with Stalin and Molotov in Stalin's Kremlin office.

After Choibalsan introduced the situation on Mongolia's western frontier Stalin asked about the numbers and the organization of the Mongolian military, and said: "Are you afraid of China? Why don't you strike a good blow? What are your border troops doing? What will happen if the Chinese invade again?" Ivanov inserted: "They are holding themselves back."

Choibalsan: "There is no reason for us to fear China or to hold back. If the Chinese invade again, we can certainly give them an appropriate blow in response. As for the specifics of the situation, it is true that our border troops are not at the border but, in some places, 15-60 kilometers on the inside. As the conversation proceeded, Choibalsan talked freely about his opinion concerning Ospan. The content of what he said was: "One needs to help Ospan, first and foremost, with the needed weapons. He is one of the clan leaders of the Altai Kazakhs. He has been struggling for freedom continuously since 1939, and in the meantime their leaders were captured and killed, and only Ospan has remained. He is leading more than a 1000 from over a 300 households. Recently about 100 households joined him; other than the Kazakh clans who follow, there are many other nationalities. Although they all engage in bad things like killing and robbery, Ospan is said not to participate in this. I don't know if this is true or false. In any case, if one provides weapons to Ospan, and through him cleans Altai from the Chinese, their Kazakhs and other nationalities will find freedom. I also think that the Mongols who live there will become free." Using a map, he showed the Mongolian western frontier, the locations of our troops and posts, and Ospan's whereabouts.

Having heard Choibalsan's views, Stalin said: "One needs to help Ospan. But why are you not helping? You don't have guns and bullets?"

Choibalsan: "First, we waited for approval from here. Second, even though the response has come, weapons have not arrived until now."

Stalin: "How many people can this Ospan of yours put out? How many weapons does he need."

Ivanov, from the side: "He can put out 400 people. As for many, whatever the amount, it is good. If they have weapons, they can find more people."

Stalin called General A. Antonov and the Commander of the Zabaikalskii Military District M. Kovalev and, having explained the situation, instructed them to transfer into Choibalsan's care for Ospan: 400 rifles, 200 PPSH, 6 large machine guns, 30 hand-held machine guns, 2000 hand grenades, 400,000 rifle bullets and 5 binoculars.

Having announced the transfer of these weapons to Ospan, [Stalin said:] "Together with the weapons, one also needs to give Ospan men to train them how to use the weapons. One needs to help Choibalsan well in this aspect."

M. Kovalev: "The instructors will be provided from the Mongolian Khovd military district." Having approved Choibalsan's proposal to meet with Ospan in person, Stalin and Molotov complained that Ivanov was not working well in this area.

Choibalsan touched on the question of adding Soviet weapons to the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Army: "When I came to Moscow, I heard that cars were cut from our military order, which you had previously approved. This is too bad. If fifty

cargo and passenger cars are given, that would be good.”

Stalin: “It is difficult to give cars. We need them to hit the Germans. Well, what can I do, I can give 30 cars. Can’t do any more.”

At the end of the conversation, Choibalsan asked Stalin about carrying out intensive work from now on among the Mongols in the Chinese territory, that is – Ningxia, Gansu, Qinghai, Khukh Nuur [sic, also Qinghai] and Tsaidam. Stalin: “Correct. Completely right. In any case, conduct work there. One could run out of time.” This was the first time such conversation took place in this close circle of four people.

On February 22, 1944 at 11pm J. Stalin hosted a meal for Choibalsan in the Kremlin. Other than Stalin, V. Molotov, G. Malenkov, L. Beria, A. Mikoyan, and the Soviet Ambassador Ivanov were present. It is said that Choibalsan was coughing as he sat at the table. But Stalin showed him a bottle of vodka, saying “this is Pertsovka. It is good for cough, if you drink three glasses of it, [the cough] will go away.” Having said this, Stalin filled up everyone’s glasses from the bottle, Choibalsan noted in his diary. Raising toasts to each other’s health, and in the process of eating, the conversation turned on Mongolia.

J. Stalin: “Choibalsan is not only the leader of Outer Mongolia but also of Inner Mongolia.” From this, the conversation between those present moved from Khalkha to other Mongols.

A. Mikoyan: “If those Mongolian find freedom, you Mongolia will expand considerably.”

Choibalsan: “This is not about that. I am not talking about expanding Mongolia. In my view, it is important for those Mongolians to find their freedom. As for what they will do once they find freedom, they will presumably know themselves.”

Stalin supported this: “Correct, right.”

Another question touched upon as the question of the Mongolian people’s religion. J. Stalin: “One should not close off people’s worship. In any case, the people worship and pray. One should even open temples. But the books they read should be in Mongolian. And the monks should be in your hands. Do you have such monks?” Choibalsan: “One could find, get such monks.” The key politics-related point of this conversation being such, it continued from 23 o’clock until 3 o’clock in the morning...