

Document 9.9: “Manifesto on the Seizure of Chiang Kai-shek,” a telegram sent to the nation by General Zhang Xueliang, December 12, 1936

This “Telegram to the Nation” was issued from Xi’an on December 12, 1936 by Zhang Xueliang, Yang Hucheng, and other leaders of the Northwest. It is a statement of their motives and objectives in detaining Chiang Kai-shek.

Ever since the loss of the northeastern provinces five years ago, our national sovereignty has been steadily weakened, and our territory has dwindled day by day. We suffered national humiliation at the time of the Shanghai Truce, and again with the Tanggu Truce and the He-Umetsu Agreement. There is not a single citizen who does not feel sick at heart because of this.

Recently there have been startling changes in the international situation. Certain Powers are intriguing with one another, and using our nation and our people as a sacrifice. When hostilities began in East Suiyuan, popular resentment reached its height, and our soldiers everywhere were very indignant.

At this juncture, our Central Leader ought to encourage both military and civilians to organize the whole people in a united war of national defense. But while those soldiers at the front endure death and bloodshed in the defense of our national territories, the diplomatic authorities are still seeking compromises.

Ever since the unjust imprisonment of the patriotic leaders in Shanghai, the whole world has been startled; the whole of our people has been filled with anger and distress. To love one’s country is an offence! This is a terrifying prospect.

Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, surrounded by a group of unworthy advisers, has forfeited the support of the masses of our people. He is deeply guilty for the harm his policies have done the country. We, Zhang Xueliang and the others, undersigned, advised him with tears to take another way; but we were repeatedly rejected and rebuked.

Not long ago, the students in Xi'an were demonstrating in their National Salvation movement, and General Chiang set the police to killing these patriotic children. How could anyone with a human conscience bear to do this? We, his colleagues of many years' standing, could not bear to sit still and witness it.

Therefore we have tendered our last advice to Marshal Chiang, while guaranteeing his safety, in order to stimulate his awakening.

The Military and Civilians in the Northwest unanimously make the following demands:

1. Reorganize the Nanjing Government, and admit all parties to share the joint responsibility of saving the nation.
2. Stop all kinds of civil wars.
3. Immediately release the patriotic leaders arrested in Shanghai.
4. Release all political prisoners throughout the country.
5. Emancipate the patriotic movement of the people.
6. Safeguard the political freedom of the people to organize and call meetings.
7. Actually carry out the Will of Dr. Sun Yat-sen.
8. Immediately call a National Salvation Conference.

The eight items above are the points of National Salvation unanimously maintained by us and by all the Military and Civilians throughout the Northwest.

We, therefore, hope that you gentlemen will stoop to meet public sentiment and sincerely adopt these demands, so as to open one line of life for the future, and remedy past mistakes that have been the ruin of the country. The great cause is before us: it does not permit glancing backward. We hope to carry out the policies here maintained only for the liberation and benefit of the country. As to our merit or guilt, we leave this to the judgment of our fellow-countrymen.

In sending this telegram, we urgently await your order.

Xi'an, December 12, 1936.

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