Political settlement and integration had gone hand in hand with negotiations for cease-fire, but the interplay of conflicting interests magnified the problems facing Executive Headquarters and charged the atmosphere in which Marshall had to work. In January, before the plane carrying the representatives of the Committee of Three could get airborne from Chungking to set up Executive Headquarters in Peiping, Chou En-lai charged the Nationalists with violating agreements by advancing in the North, in Jehol and East Hopei. Governor Chang Chun retorted that the Communists had already erred by attempting to occupy Northern Honan. The Committee of Three ordered investigations of the violations.¹

As each side piled up data, Marshall tried soothing tactics. He reminded Chou that many of his complaints could be handled by Executive Headquarters and told Chang Chun that the Generalissimo would be placed in an untenable position if his troops did not observe the cease-fire.²

Marshall soon realized that he had too few field-team members to deal with growing complaints, and he asked for more staff. Executive Headquarters observed that neither side wanted teams sent to areas where they were winning. Marshall’s reports of progress by the teams drew from Truman an expression that confidence “in your judgment and ability” had been amply justified. Robertson reported to the State Department near the end of the month that he thought the problems in Jehol had been solved.³

No sooner had field problems in North China subsided than Nationalist Foreign Minister Wang Shih-chieh reported political problems in Manchuria. He had recently spoken to the Soviet Ambassador in China about the Russian failure to withdraw forces
from the area by February 1, as promised in the Sino-Soviet Treaty. Wang concluded that the rate of withdrawal would depend on Chinese concessions as to what the Soviets could claim as war booty. The Russians wanted 50 percent ownership or participation in coal and hydroelectric systems, future air-transport systems, and virtually every phase of the Manchurian economy. Their demands were far in excess of any legitimate claims.4

Marshall reminded Wang that the current situation in Manchuria emphasized the need for rapid unification of Chinese factions, to lessen their vulnerability to Soviet demands. He recommended that Wang make no commitment to the Soviets as to war booty unless a settlement of limited nature were possible on the basis of the Sino-Soviet Treaty.

Although Marshall believed that time was running against the Soviets as long as their troops remained in Manchuria contrary to their promises, he was disturbed by the situation. Not only did it involve him in matters far beyond his mission, "but it is perhaps more dangerous to world accord than any other present issue." He believed that the survival of the most recent arrangements in China depended "to an important degree on the disposition of the festering situation in Manchuria. I also believe that our Government must shortly do more for China in this matter than give advice."5

Marshall was not certain what steps could be taken with reasonable hope of success, but he suggested to President Truman that unification in China should be expedited, that Headquarters, China Theater of Operations, be changed to a Military Advisory Group, and that the Marines be removed as soon as possible. To strengthen their position, the Nationalists should announce their intention of sending troops to Japan and should be prepared to carry the Manchurian question to the Far Eastern Commission. Their case would be strengthened by unification, the removal of American forces from China, and the presence of Chinese troops in the occupation forces of Japan. Truman expressed interest in the first two points but doubted whether the Far Eastern Commission should go beyond matters of surrender, disarmament, and control of Japan, which could include disposition of Japanese external assets in Manchuria.6

Despite promising results in the field, disquieting incidents continued. Walter Robertson asked Marshall to intervene with Chiang Kai-shek to get proper instructions issued to National commanders who wanted to deal with Communist forces as guerrillas. Soon afterward, 500 National protesters invaded Executive Headquarters in Peiping to demonstrate against the Communists. Protests
were made to the Generalissimo, but other demonstrations, possibly incited by his supporters, sprang up elsewhere. On the 23rd, 10,000 university students paraded in Chungking, demanding the return of Manchuria and the evacuation of Soviet forces. Later, a small group there attacked news offices of the Communists and of the Democratic League, and stormed into headquarters of the Communist delegation. Counselor Smyth of the U.S Embassy suggested these incidents were instigated by the CC Clique in order to disrupt implementation of the Political Consultative Conference.

When Chou En-lai complained two days later, Marshall reminded him that the guilt was not all on one side, since a recent Yenan press release had raised new questions about the situation in Manchuria. Chou shrugged off the difficulties, declaring that the Communists were willing to demobilize large forces in Manchuria and had not objected to five Nationalist armies in the area.

In spite of such continual troubles, Marshall decided as early as February 21 that negotiations were progressing well enough for him to make a mid-March trip to Washington. On the 22nd, in a chatty letter to his wartime aide Frank McCarthy, he wrote:

...most confidentially, I have plans to make a quick trip home to be gone about four or five weeks in all. In Washington, I will work on loans, surplus property, shipping, etc. I hope to bring Mrs M. back with me for the remaining months of my stay—until about August or September. I am going to try and have Wedemeyer made Ambassador to take my place.

I have forced so many compromises on both sides that I am in the awkward position of being obligated by pressure from both sides to stay on and maintain a balance between the mistrusts of the two parties in their attempt to make a coalition government work.

Near the end of February, Marshall radioed the President that he wished to return to Washington about March 12 to discuss such matters as the transfer of surplus property, shipping, and the arrangement of loans. He thought he could be back in China in time "to balance the differences that are yet to rise over the major adjustments there that will be getting under way, political as well as military."

He had much to do before he could leave. He faced a strenuous trip to the North, where he, Chang Chih-chung, and Chou En-lai, as the Committee of Three, would be briefed by members of Executive Headquarters on developments in various cities. Then they
would try to clear up local problems interfering with a cease-fire. The omens were not very favorable, but at least his staff at Chungking noted a slight lessening of tension in the office as he left the city.\textsuperscript{11}

In the afternoon the Committee of Three was briefed by Robertson at Executive Headquarters in Peiping, then Marshall spoke to the staff in a nearby auditorium. He praised the headquarters as unique in world history, stressing the way in which the agency reached into remote regions to promote peace. He added: "Many individuals will be called upon to make what may seem to them at this time to be a great personal sacrifice. Some must sacrifice but I think that the majority will profit greatly. The prosperity of China is directly dependent upon your execution of this new mission. . . \textsuperscript{12}

A day later, Marshall pleaded strongly for agreement.

I think the important thing here is that we are not interested in the past now, but we are interested in the future, and until conditions have been restored to normal, personal feelings will have to be buried. The general objective we are working for is far too great and far too important to be stopped by small disagreements, no matter how large they may appear on the ground.\textsuperscript{13}

At Tsinan on March 2, Marshall praised the work of the field teams, which had labored under great difficulties. He knew that local groups might resent their interference in local affairs, which the teams and headquarters might not understand. But sometimes there had to be an arbiter. He cited the example of American baseball. Although the umpire was unpopular, both sides recognized that there must be such an authority. " . . . the game can't go on without him. It becomes a riot. We have not the authority of an umpire, but we endeavor to interpret the rules and agreements that have been arrived at in Chungking. And baseball goes along with American democracy."\textsuperscript{14}

This peripatetic evangelism was a new style of diplomacy for both Marshall and the Chinese, but he was hopeful. At Taiyuan, the Committee of Three listened patiently while complaints were registered of delays in turning over areas or railroads or arms seized from the Japanese, of disputes over removal of obstructions along the railroads, and of the challenges to efforts by the field teams to hasten the cease-fire. Marshall was encouraged by Chang Chih-chung's proposal that they stop arguing over who was at fault and
abide by the decision of Executive Headquarters, to which Chou En-lai at once agreed. 

Yenan was the big stop on the trip, for there Marshall at last met Mao Tse-tung. Since late December, Marshall had heard almost every day something about the Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party. No matter what agreement Marshall won from Chou En-lai, the final decision had to be made at Communist Headquarters in Yenan. Pudding-shaped Mao at first seemed far less impressive than the handsome, trim Chou En-lai. As usual, Mao’s clothes were “rumpled and plain as if picked up from a pile of hundreds.”

Marshall hoped to bring Mao and Chiang closer together. A Soviet-Nationalist agreement of November 27, 1945, by which the Soviet Union had agreed to withdraw from Mukden and Changchun and permit Nationalist forces to be flown in, and had promised to leave Manchuria in January 1946, had put a damper on Chinese Communist efforts to bar Nationalist forces from the area. Reluctantly, Yenan dropped its criticism of the United States and its demands for the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the North, thus making possible some of Marshall’s success.

But the situation soon began to change again, and there was evidence of greater Communist dissatisfaction with anything going on in Manchuria that favored the Nationalists or the Americans. Whatever intentions Chou En-lai might have to engage in further negotiation counted less and less with Mao and his advisers. His military commanders, who had earlier wanted to take over cities in the North as the Soviet forces withdrew, were reluctant to stand by while the Nationalists strengthened their positions. Increased criticism of the American position and flurries of attacks on the reactionary policies of Chiang Kai-shek reflected a growing impatience with all that Marshall hoped to accomplish.

Marshall did not know the degree of Soviet control of Chinese Communist policy, but he sensed that Mao was the key to settlement of problems in the North. Ross Terrill, in his biography of Mao Tse-tung, says that Mao expected little from the negotiations and seemed detached, moving automatically through the discussions during Marshall’s visit. But he felt impelled by Marshall’s presence to toast the “durable cooperation between America and China and between Nationalists and Communists.”

Mao promised to abide by the terms of the various agreements. Marshall praised Chou En-lai for his friendliness and cooperation during the long negotiations at Chungking. Declaring that he had no desire to interfere in China’s affairs, the American emphasized
the need for a cease-fire. Then he stated to Mao directly the point that he had already made to Chiang Kai-shek: the United States could not continue to give aid unless there was unification of the country. (Despite the implication that unification would bring U.S. assistance to both Communists and Nationalists, Mao was not inclined to rely on such aid.)

As the talks progressed, Mao said he hoped that the agreements for a cease-fire would extend to Manchuria and that field teams would be sent there. Recalling that Yenan had shown little enthusiasm for measures likely to limit Communist gains in Manchuria, Marshall decided on plain speaking. He wrote President Truman that he had been frank “to an extreme” and that Mao had not shown resentment. It had been his understanding, Marshall said, that the agreements did extend to Manchuria, but the Communists had thrown doubt on that by making premature announcements of their special claims there. Chiang Kai-shek was reluctant to send field teams to Manchuria, lest the American presence on the teams lead to international complications (The Generalissimo had said more bluntly that he feared the Soviets would demand representation on the teams.)

Leaving his role of stern uncle, Marshall shifted to honored visitor. That evening he caught cold “watching an elaborate performance of drum dancers and folk singers in an icy auditorium.”

Of the farewell as Marshall left the next day, Terrill wrote:

Marshall was sincerely proceeding, in deep fog, down a straight road. Ready to depart at the Yenan airport, he asked Mao when he would be prepared to go and talk to Chiang again. “I shall go whenever Chiang asks me,” Mao replied, as distant as a mountain. He could find a way of agreeing with Marshall’s emotional declaration: “I can tell that an unprecedented era of progress awaits China.”

In common with many a touring leader, Marshall was momentarily blinded by the friendly reception and did not fully see the realities of the situation. With considerable pride he reported to Truman that he had completed a 3,000-mile trip with the Committee of Three to all the principal field commanders and “there was every indication that affairs would clear up quickly and communications be reopened and normal life for the poor civilians actually gotten under way. . . . My reception everywhere was enthusiastic and in cities tumultuous.” He might tire enormously of the arguments among the leaders, but he never forgot the ordinary Chi-
nese. Members of his staff recalled his saying, again and again, "I want to do something for these poor people."

But China was vast and its problems overwhelming. He mentioned to the President the shortage of U.S. officers for the field teams.

The presence of an American, in such circumstances will be mandatory for some time to come. . . A single American with a Communist and Government representative of his committee and with communications almost non-existent will have to dominate a region larger than Pennsylvania and bring factions who have been at war for 18 years to a peaceful understanding and communications restored. . . Our men have been splendid and are performing a great service for China and for American prestige.

He had enough hope so that he dared to go ahead with his plan to return home soon to prepare for loans to reward the factions for keeping peace. Marshall completed his report to the President by asking that he be called home for consultation. Truman was glad to agree, noting that Churchill was in the country and would like to see Marshall, but that this would require his return to Washington before March 12.20

As Marshall was writing Truman, James Shepley of his staff, who had just returned to the United States in accordance with earlier agreements, was explaining the General's thinking on China to the President. The President said that Marshall's visit would be helpful with regard to Congress and the general public, and that he personally understood the great need for liberal assistance to China. If the country had more men like Marshall, Truman added, "It could lick this period of crises every hour on the hour." He understood Marshall's desire to wind up his mission and would do what he could to help.21

The fragility of recent peace initiatives was soon evident. On March 9, Raymond Ludden of the U.S. Embassy at Chungking alerted Marshall to veering Communist views on cooperation. Recent Yenan broadcasts were playing down American contributions to victory over Japan and Germany. The Yenan radio had adopted the Soviet use of "fascist" to describe any policy they opposed. The editor of the Central Committee paper in Yenan had been bitter over American sea and air transport of Nationalist troops northward, and over American presence in Iran and North China. The Communists also professed to know nothing of the Soviet stripping of industries in Manchuria or of Russian demands for a share in
Sino-Soviet development companies there. Ludden thought it time for the Chinese Communists to make clear whether they were Chinese-Nationalist reformers following Marxist ideology or a satellite of the Soviet Union. Whether or not Ludden’s memorandum at this particular time influenced Marshall, something angered him about Manchuria that morning. John Melby of the Embassy staff wrote in his diary: “We had a rough session on Manchuria with Marshall this morning. He is furious about the Russian looting, and he is irritated that the Communists, although not defending the Russian actions, remain silent about them.”

Marshall’s last days before leaving for six weeks in the United States were filled with efforts to get field teams into Manchuria. Hoping to hasten an agreement, he proposed: (1) that field teams accompany Nationalist troops, (2) that they should bring fighting to an end and arrange to prevent further incidents; (3) that government troops could occupy places necessary for the establishment of national sovereignty and hold a strip thirty kilometers wide on either side of the two railroads mentioned in the Sino-Soviet Treaty.

It was not likely that the Communists would ever agree (1) to the evacuation of any place they held that the Nationalists needed for the establishment of national sovereignty, or (2) to the prevention of Communist forces from occupying places evacuated by Soviet troops. When Soviets troops seemed about to leave Manchuria, Yenan abandoned its policy of working with Marshall for a course of self-help.

While Chou En-lai was insisting that the field teams should be empowered to deal with military and political matters, Marshall announced that he had to leave for the United States and that Lieutenant General Alvan C. Gillem would represent him in his absence. Gillem, an able corps commander in Europe during the war, was one of the senior officers proffered by Marshall to MacArthur, who accepted him for command in case of an invasion of Japan. After the war in the Pacific ended, he was shifted to China. Events would show that he could not hold the warring factions to their agreements.

On his way home, Marshall radioed Truman about the problems he had met in his last day’s discussions. Gilding the situation’s flaws, he said he thought he had won agreement from the two opponents. But arguments from Chiang and Chou on the day before his departure left little basis for optimism.

The Generalissimo had bluntly stated that he was convinced that the Communist Party of China was loyal to the Soviet Union and
that its interest in entering the National Government was to be able to play the Soviet hand. He felt that the Chinese Communists looked upon Marshall as their protector and had accepted his proposals “largely for the purpose of obtaining well-trained, organized, and equipped 18 divisions.” Chiang was concerned because the U.S. President had announced that loans to the National Government were predicated on certain political changes. He believed that this had “defeated the entire effect of the message except in so far as it was of great advantage to the Communist Party. He hoped that any loan which might be granted to China would have no conditions attached to it. At least there would be no public announcement of such conditions.”

On the same day, Chou En-lai had declared to Marshall that his party shared no blame for the political situation in China. The Communists had never interfered with negotiations between the Nationalists and Soviet Russia and they had never rejected consultation. He said that a Communist representative had assured the Nationalists that they could move to Mukden without opposition. The Communists, he averred, had kept their word on this and acted only when the Nationalist forces struck westward toward Jehol.

Chou explained the recent increase of Communist forces in Manchuria by saying that the withdrawal of Soviet forces along the railways left a kind of vacuum into which the Nationalists poured troops without notifying Executive Headquarters. Dispatch of field teams had been delayed a month. The result was that “we were left in such a situation that somehow we have to clarify our position in Manchuria ourselves.” He laid chief blame on the CC Clique. It had not only provoked great disturbances against the Communists but also opposed those Political Consultative Conference delegates who did not belong to their clique. He accused the reactionaries of trying to torpedo the conference proposals.

The next day, Chou En-lai insisted that political and military matters must be considered together in Manchuria by the Committee of Three. He begged Marshall to keep in touch with the situation from the United States and said that if the matter of Manchurian supervision could not be solved before Marshall left, “I hope you will still render a great help to it from afar, after your leaving. The coming month is indeed the critical period, as you have said.”

Chiang Kai-shek also stressed Marshall’s key position in the negotiations. In thanking President Truman for sending Marshall, who he felt had fulfilled “your expectations,” he added that he
hoped the General would return to China at once on the completion of his immediate mission, "... to my mind, not only is General Marshall's speedy return to China of urgent necessity, but his continued presence here for the next three years will play an important part in the stabilization of the Far East."²⁷

These testimonials to his crucial importance to the success of negotiations were affirmed on March 11 by General Wedemeyer's message to General Eisenhower concerning the former Chief of Staff. Although he would later bitterly attack Marshall's policies in China, Wedemeyer then wrote:

He [Marshall] has done a fine job, quickly winning the respect and admiration of all with whom he came in contact. His approach to the problems presented has been logical, first accomplishing cessation of hostilities, and now he is well on the way toward the successful implementation of a plan that will integrate military forces of the Central Government and the Communists. All of this has been accomplished in the background of intrigue, mistrust, selfish personalities, and oriental cunning. Really a stupendous accomplishment, and I doubt seriously whether any other person in the world could have done as much in so short a time. The permanence of his accomplishments however is in my mind contingent upon his physical presence. If he were to be eliminated from the picture for the next several months, I feel that the opposing factions would soon be at each other's throats and the situation that existed last October would again prevail. General Marshall's international prestige and the very stature of the man have dominated the field and brought about conciliatory action on the part of the Communists and Central Government representatives.²⁸

Marshall knew nothing of this estimate, but he did draw comfort from a March 18 message from the Generalissimo saying that the Plenary Session of the Nationalist Central Committee would soon close. He was pleased that the members of that group had entrusted him with full power to handle Manchuria—a welcome change from their earlier attitude of wanting to overturn the arrangements made regarding that area. "You need not worry," Chiang Kai-shek concluded, "about the anxieties I expressed to you before you left Chungking."²⁹ Unfortunately, there would be other seriously disquieting messages to speed his return.