

1948

Speeches/Documents

Title: The concept of operations for the Beijing - Tianjin campaign

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Source: *This was a telegram drafted by Mao Zedong for the revolutionary Military Commission of the CCP. SWM Vol. IV*

Description: campaign, fought by the Northeast Field Army and two armies of the Northern China People's Liberation Army under the command of Lin Biao, Luo Ronghuan, Nie Rongzhen and other comrades, began early in December 1948

1. The enemy forces in Changchiakou, Hsinpao-an and Huailai and in the entire area of Peiping, Tientsin, Tangku and Tangshan -except for a few units, such as certain divisions of the 35th, 62nd and 94th Corps, which still have a fairly high combat effectiveness for the defence of fortified positions -- have little offensive spirit; they are like birds startled by the mere twang of a bow-string. This is especially the case since you advanced south of the Great Wall. You should on no account overrate the enemy's combat effectiveness. Some of our comrades have suffered through overrating the enemy's combat effectiveness, but they have arrived at a correct understanding after being criticized. The enemy at both Changchiakou and Hsinpao-an is definitely encircled and will in all probability find it extremely difficult to break through and escape. About half the 16th Corps has been speedily wiped out. The enemy's 104th Corps at Huailai has hurriedly fled south and will probably be wiped out today or tomorrow. After that is done, you will be ready to dispatch the 4th Column from the southwest ¹² to the northeast to cut the link between Nankow and Peiping. We think this may not be easy to accomplish; for, either the 94th Corps and the remnants of the 16th Corps will quickly withdraw to Peiping, or the 94th, 16th and 92nd Corps will concentrate in the Nankow-Changping-Shahochen region for joint defence. But this move by our 4th Column will directly menace the northwestern and northern suburbs of Peiping and tie down those enemy forces so that they dare not move. If they should dare to move further west to reinforce the 35th Corps, we could either directly cut off their retreat or launch a direct attack on Peiping; therefore they will probably not dare to move further west. The army in northern China commanded by Yang Teh-chih, Lo Jui-ching and Keng Piao is employing 9 divisions to encircle 3 divisions of the enemy's 35th Corps; this constitutes absolute superiority. They have proposed to wipe out these enemy divisions at an early date, but we intend to ask them not to attack for the time being so as to lull the enemy at Peiping and Tientsin and make it difficult for him to come to a decision to flee by sea. They have employed 2 columns to encircle the 35th Corps and 1 column to check the 104th Corps and have beaten back both these enemy forces.

2. We now agree to your immediately sending the 5th Column to the vicinity of Nankow to menace the enemy at Peiping, Nankow and Huaijou from the northeast. This column will remain there so that later (in about ten or fifteen days, that is, when the army in northern China commanded by Yang Teh-chih, Lo Jui-ching and Keng Piao has annihilated the 35th Corps) your 4th Column can be released for service in the east. Therefore, please order the 5th Column to continue its march west today.

3. The 3rd Column should on no account go to Nankow but, in accordance with our telegram of the 9th, should move to the region east of Peiping and south of Tunghsien to threaten Peiping from the east and, together with the 4th, 11th and 5th Columns, form an encirclement around Peiping.

4. However, our real aim is not to encircle Peiping first but rather to encircle Tientsin, Tangku, Lutai and Tangshan first.

5. We estimate that your 10th, 9th, 6th and 8th Columns, your Artillery Column and your 7th Column will have assembled in the region around Yutien by about December 15. We propose that, in the few days between December 20 and 25, you move with lightning speed and employ the 6 columns -- the 3rd (which is to march east from the eastern suburbs of Peiping), the 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th -- to encircle the enemy at Tientsin, Tangku, Lutai and Tangshan, provided that the enemy's situation at those points remains roughly the same as at present. The method is to place 2 columns around Wuching -- at Langfang, Hohsiwu and Yangtsun -- and to use 5 columns as wedges to be driven

between enemy positions at Tientsin, Tangku, Lutai, Tangshan and Kuyeh and so cut off contacts between the enemy forces. All these columns should build two-way blocking positions to ensure that the enemy cannot escape. Then they should rest and consolidate their troops and, after recovering from fatigue, attack and wipe out some small enemy groups. In the meantime the 4th Column should move from northwest to east of Peiping. Before the 4th Column starts to move, the army in northern China commanded by Yang Teh-chih, Lo Jui-ching and Keng Piao should wipe out the enemy in Hsinpao-an. In the east, according to circumstances, every effort should be made to wipe out the enemy in Tangku first and control that seaport. If these two points, Tangku (the most important) and Hsinpao-an, are captured, you will have the initiative on the whole chessboard. The above dispositions constitute, in reality, the wholesale encirclement of the enemy in Changchiakou, Hsinpao-an, Nankow, Peiping, Huaijou, Shunyi, Tunghsien, Wanping (Chohsien and Lianghsiang have been captured), Fengtai, Tientsin, Tangku, Lutai, Tangshan and Kaiping.

6. This method is generally the same as that you used in the fighting along the line through Ihsien, Chinchow, Chihsi, Hsingcheng, Suichung, Shanhaikuan and Luanhsien. ³

7. In the two weeks beginning from today (December 11-25), the basic principle is to encircle without attacking (in the case of Changchiakou and Hsinpao-an) and, in some cases, to cut off without encircling (in the case of Peiping, Tientsin and Tungchow, to make only a strategic encirclement and cut the links between the enemy forces, but not to make a tactical encirclement) in order to wait for the completion of our dispositions and then wipe out the enemy forces one by one. In particular, you must not wipe out all the enemy forces at Changchiakou, Hsinpao-an and Nankow because that would compel the enemy east of Nankow to make a quick decision to bolt. Please make sure you grasp this point.

8. In order to avoid prompting Chiang Kai-shek into making a speedy decision to ship his troops in the Peiping-Tientsin area south by sea, we are going to order Liu Po-cheng, Teng Hsiao-ping, Chen Yi and Su Yu, after they have wiped out Huang Wei's army, to spare the remainder of Tu Yu-ming's armies under Chiu Ching-chuan, Li Mi and Sun Yuan-liang (about half of which have already been destroyed) and for two weeks to make no dispositions for their final annihilation.

9. To prevent the enemy from fleeing towards Tsingtao, we are going to order our troops in Shantung to mass certain forces to control a section of the Yellow River near Tsinan and to make preparations along the Tsingtao-Tsinan Railway. 10. There is little or no possibility that the enemy will flee towards Hsuechow, Chengchow, Sian or Suiyuan. 11. The main, indeed the only, concern is that the enemy might flee by sea. Therefore, in the coming two weeks the general method should be to encircle without attacking or to cut off without encircling. 12. This plan is beyond the enemy's range of expectation, and it will be very difficult for him to discern it before you complete your final dispositions. At present, the enemy is probably calculating that you will attack Peiping. 13. The enemy always underrates the energy of our army and overrates his own strength, though at the same time he is like a bird startled by the mere twang of a bow-string. The enemy at Peiping and Tientsin will never expect you to be able to complete the above dispositions by December 25. 14. In order to complete these dispositions by December 25, you should inspire your troops in the next two weeks to ignore fatigue, to have no fear of depletion of numbers and have no fear of cold and hunger; after these dispositions have been made, they can rest and consolidate and take their time in attacking. 15. The sequence of attacks will be roughly the following: first, the Tangku-Lutai sector; second, Hsinpao-an; third, the Tangshan sector; fourth, the Tientsin and Changchiakou sectors; and, lastly, the Peiping sector. 16. What are your views on this plan? What are its shortcomings? Are there any difficulties in its execution? Please consider all this and reply by telegraph.

Notes

The Peiping-Tientsin campaign, fought by the Northeast Field Army and two armies of the Northern China People's Liberation Army under the command of Lin Piao, Lo Jung-huan, Nieh Jung-chen and other comrades, began early in December 1948, immediately after the victorious conclusion of the Liaohsi-Shenyang campaign in the Northeast. Acting upon Comrade Mao Tse-tung's instructions, the Northeast Field Army swept south of the Great Wall immediately after it had victoriously fulfilled its task of liberating the whole Northeast, and joined the armies of the People's Liberation Army in northern China in co-ordinated actions to encircle and wipe out the Kuomintang troops in that region.

Greatly alarmed by the victory of the People's Liberation Army in the Northeast, more than 600,000 Kuomintang troops under Fu Tso-yi, Commander-in-Chief of the Kuomintang's Northern China "Bandit Suppression" Headquarters, hurriedly shortened their lines of defence with the intention of fleeing south by sea or west to Suiyuan Province. Moving with lightning speed, our army cut apart the enemy forces and surrounded them separately at five strong-points -- Peiping, Tientsin, Changchiakou, Hsinpao-an and Tangku -- thus blocking their escape routes to the south and west. On December 22, the enemy's main force at Hsinpao-an (the headquarters of his 35th Corps and 2 divisions) was surrounded and wiped out. On the 24th, Changchiakou was taken and a corps headquarters and 7 divisions of the enemy's 11th Army, over 54,000 men in all, were wiped out. On January 14, 1949, our troops surrounding Tientsin launched a general offensive against the city after Chen Chang-chieh, commander of the enemy garrison, refused to surrender. The city was liberated after twenty-nine hours' fierce fighting, the enemy garrison of over 130,000 men was wiped out and Chen Chang-chieh was captured. As a result, more than 200,000 enemy troops garrisoning Peiping were tightly surrounded by our troops and their fate was sealed. Owing to the efforts we made to win it over, the enemy's Peiping garrison, commanded by General Fu Tso-yi, accepted peaceful reorganization. On January 31, our troops entered Peiping, the city was proclaimed peacefully liberated and the Peiping-Tientsin campaign came to a victorious close. During this campaign, with the exception of the enemy garrison of over 50,000 men in Tangku, which fled by sea, over 520,000 Kuomintang troops were put out of action and reorganized by our army. In September 1949 the Kuomintang troops in Suiyuan Province declared by telegram that they had revolted and had come over to the people and that they would accept reorganization.

This means the area southwest of Nankow

In September 1948, to prevent the enemy forces in Ihsien, Chinchow, Chihsi, Hsingcheng, Suichung, Shanhaikuan, Luanhsien and Changli, all points along the Peiping-Liaoning Railway, from shortening their lines and concentrating, the Northeast Field Army then operating along that railway adopted the method of first using part of its troops to encircle and cut apart the enemy units at these points and of then wiping them out one by one.

Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-Tung. Contributors: Tse-Tung Mao - author. Publisher: Foreign Languages Press. Place of Publication: Peking. Publication Year: 1963. Page Number: 375- 379.

The Beiping-Tianjin Campaign was a decisive campaign fought between November 29, 1948 and January 31, 1949, by the PLA Northeast Field Army, two armies of the North China Field Army and part of local armed forces against Kuomintang troops over an area extending from Zhangjiakou in the west to Tanggu and Tangshan in the east, including Beiping and Tianjin. The People's Liberation Army wiped out the defending Kuomintang forces in Xinbao'an, Zhangjiakou and Tianjin. Owing to efforts to win them over and as a result of negotiations, the defending enemy forces in Beiping, commanded by Fu Zuoyi, commander-in-chief of the enemy's North China "Bandit Suppression" Headquarters, accepted reorganization by the PLA, and Beiping was liberated peacefully. During the campaign more than 520,000 Kuomintang troops were wiped out or reorganized, and North China was liberated in the main.

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Wortzel notes, for instance, that the campaign to capture Tianjin had to deal with the fact that the city is surrounded by water and crossed by canals and waterways, as it is the gate to the sea for the North China plain. Nationalist forces had flooded much of the area by the first week of January 1949, "slowing movement and forcing the Communist forces to gather boats to conduct their attack."

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