

1950

Speeches/Documents

Title: Decision to send volunteers

Author: Mao

Date: 2 october 1950 **Source:** . Uncertain partners pg.275-276

Description:

1. We have decided to send some of our troops to Korea under the name of [Chinese People's] Volunteers to fight the United States and its lackey Syngman Rhee and to aid our Korean Comrades. From the following considerations, we think it necessary to do so: the Korean revolutionary force will meet with a fundamental defeat, and the American aggressors will rampage unchecked once they occupy the whole of Korea. This will be unfavorable to the entire East.

2. Since we have decided to send Chinese troops to fight the Americans in Korea, we hold that, first, we should be able to solve the problem; that is, [we are] ready to annihilate and drive out the invading armies of the United States and other countries. Second, since Chinese troops are to fight American troops in Korea (although we will use the name Volunteers), we must be prepared for a declaration of war by the United States and for the subsequent use of the U.S. air force to bomb many of China's cities and industrial bases, as well as an attack by the U.S. navy on [our] coastal areas.

3. Of these two problems, the primary problem is whether or not the Chinese troops can annihilate the American troops in Korea and effectively resolve the Korean issue. Only when it is possible for our troops to annihilate the American troops in Korea, principally the Eighth Army (an old army with combat effectiveness), can the situation become favorable to the revolutionary camp and to China, although the second problem (a declaration of war by the United States) is still a serious one. This means that the Korean issue will be solved in reality along with the defeat of the American troops (in name it will probably remain unsolved because the United States will most likely not admit Korea's victory for a considerable period of time). Consequently, even if the United States declares war on China, the war will probably not be of great scope or last long. The most unfavorable situation, we hold, would result from the inability of the Chinese troops to annihilate American troops in Korea and the involvement of the two countries' troops in a stalemate while the United States publicly declares war on China, undermines the plans for China's economic reconstruction, which has already begun, and sparks the dissatisfaction of [China's] national bourgeoisie and other segments of the people (they are very afraid of war).

4. Under the current situation, we have reached a decision to order the 12 divisions stationed in advance in South Manchuria to set off on October 15. They will be deployed in appropriate areas in North Korea (not necessarily reaching to the 38th parallel). On the one hand, they will fight the enemies who dare to cross the 38th parallel. At the initial stage, they will merely engage in defensive warfare to wipe out small detachments of enemy troops and ascertain the enemy's situation; on the other hand, they will wait for the delivery of Soviet weapons. Once they are [well] equipped, they will cooperate with the Korean comrades in counterattacks to annihilate American aggressor troops.

5. According to our intelligence to date, an American corps (composed of two infantry divisions and a mechanized division) has 1,500 guns of 70 mm to 240 mm caliber, including tank cannons and anti-aircraft guns. In comparison, each of our corps (composed of three divisions) has only 36 such guns. The enemy dominates the air. By comparison, we have only just started training pilots. We shall not be able to employ more than 300 aircraft in combat until February 1951. Accordingly, we do not now have any certainty of success in annihilating a single American corps in one blow. Since we have made a decision to fight the Americans, we certainly must be prepared to deal with a situation in which the U.S. headquarters will employ one American corps against our troops in one [of the Korean] theaters. For the purpose of eliminating completely one enemy corps with a certainty of success, we should in such a situation assemble four times as many troops as the enemy (employing four corps to deal with one enemy corps) and firepower from one-and-a-half times to twice as heavy as the enemy's (using 2,200 to 3,000 guns of more than 70mm caliber to deal with 1,500 enemy guns of the same caliber).

6. In addition to the above-mentioned 12 divisions, we are moving 24 divisions from south of the Yangtze River and from Shaanxi and Gansu provinces to areas along the Xuzhou-Lanzhou, Tianjin-Pukou, and Beijing-Shenyang railroad lines. We plan to employ these divisions as the second and

third groups of troops sent to aid Korea in the spring and summer of next year as the future situation requires.

Remarks

Is the above text—indicating a firm Chinese decision to intervene militarily against the Americans in Korea (albeit with some trepidation and an explicit statement that the “Volunteer” forces would require adequate Soviet weaponry before they could take the offensive)—compatible with the message from Mao to Stalin dated 2 October 1950 which Roshchin cabled to Moscow on 3 October 1950 [telegram from Roshchin in Beijing to Stalin](#) [Document #12], according to the document recently declassified in the Russian archives? Clearly not. Nor is it compatible with Stalin’s statement to Kim Il Sung on October 8, stating that, in response to his own letter of October 1 seeking Chinese entry into the war, “Mao Zedong replied with a refusal, saying that he did not want to draw the USSR into the war, that the Chinese army was weak in technical terms, and that the war could cause great dissatisfaction in China.” [Document #13.] That appears to leave two principal alternatives: 1) that both Russian documents, and others in the Presidential Archives collection that are logically and chronologically consistent with the events they describe, are elaborate fakes (which I find highly unlikely, especially as the collection includes plenty of documents that are highly incriminating regarding the Soviet role in the war); or 2) (what I find more likely) that the published Chinese version of the October 2 telegram is unreliable: inaccurate, unsent, or perhaps misdated; nor can one exclude the possibility that the text was altered or falsified by Chinese authorities to present what they deemed to be a more ideologically or politically correct version of history. (In contrast to the case with Russian documents, scholars have not been permitted access to the relevant Chinese archives to examine original documents or facsimiles, and have been forced to rely on published versions.) In any case, numerous important accounts of the events leading to the PRC’s entry into the Korean War relying on the Chinese version of the 2 October 1950 Mao to Stalin cable must now be called into question. [Ed. note: Some of the more important of the many examples of recent works using the Chinese version of the cable—an English translation of which was reprinted under the headline, “Mao’s Cable Explains Drive Into Korea,” in *The New York Times* on 26 February 1992—include Christensen, “Threats, Assurances, and the Last Chance for Peace,” esp. 135-142; Hunt, “Beijing and the Korean Crisis,” esp. 460-463; Shu Guang Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture: Chinese-American Confrontations, 1949-1958* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 97; Goncharov, Lewis, and Xue, *Uncertain Partners*, esp. 176-183; Chen Jian, *China’s Road to the Korean War*, esp. 175-180; Stueck, *The Korean War*, esp. 99-100; and Shu Guang Zhang, *Mao’s Military Romanticism*, esp. 78-80.] Clearly, further research is necessary, in both the Moscow and Beijing archives, to establish the precise contents and chronology of the communications between Stalin and Mao during the first two weeks of October 1950. In the meantime, the evidence cited here should induce additional caution in treating the Chinese version of Mao’s decision to enter the Korean War. 31. N. S. Khrushchev, *The Korean War* (Moscow: Progress Publishing House), 28, in Russian; for a slightly different English translation, see *Khrushchev Remembers: The Glasnost Tapes*, trans. and ed. by Jerrold L. Schecter with Vyacheslav V. Luchkov (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1990), 147.