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Speeches/Documents

Title: Turn the army into a working force

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Description: PLA was not only a fighting force but at the same time had to be a working force and that under certain conditions it should function mainly as a working force

[This telegram was written by Comrade Mao Tse-tung for the Revolutionary Military Commission of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in reply to one from the Second and Third Field Armies. It was sent also to the other field armies concerned and to the bureaus of the Central Committee concerned. Considering that the period of severe fighting had ended after the three great campaigns of Liaohsi-Shenyang, Huai-Hai and Peiping-Tientsin, Comrade Mao Tse-tung in this telegram pointed out in good time that the People's Liberation Army was not only a fighting force but at the same time had to be a working force and that under certain conditions it should function mainly as a working force. This policy played a very important role in solving the cadre problem of that period in the new Liberated Areas and in ensuring the smooth development of the people's revolutionary cause. On the nature of the People's Liberation Army as both a fighting and a working force, see also "Report to the Second Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China", Section 2, pp. 362-63 of this volume.]

Your telegram of the 4th has been received. It is very good that you are speeding training and consolidation and preparing to start moving one month ahead of schedule. **[1]** Please proceed along these lines and do not slacken. Actually, however, training and consolidation must continue in March; the study of policy must be stressed and preparations must be made to take over and administer the large cities. From now on, the formula followed in the past twenty years, "first the rural areas, then the cities", will be reversed and changed to the formula, "first the cities, then the rural areas". The army is not only a fighting force, it is mainly a working force. All army cadres should learn how to take over and administer cities. In urban work they should learn how to be good at dealing with the imperialists and Kuomintang reactionaries, good at dealing with the bourgeoisie, good at leading the workers and organizing trade unions, good at mobilizing and organizing the youth, good at uniting with and training cadres in the new Liberated Areas, good at managing industry and commerce, good at running schools, newspapers, news agencies and broadcasting stations, good at handling foreign affairs, good at handling problems relating to the democratic parties and people's organizations, good at adjusting the relations between the cities and the rural areas and solving the problems of food, coal and other daily necessities and good at handling monetary and financial problems. In short, all urban problems, with which in the past our army cadres and fighters were unfamiliar, should from now on be shouldered by them. You are to advance

and occupy four or five provinces, and in addition to the cities you will have to attend to vast rural areas. Since in the south all the rural areas will be newly liberated, the work will be fundamentally different from that in the old Liberated Areas of the north. In the first year, the policy of reducing rent and interest cannot be applied, and rent and interest will have to be paid in roughly the same way as before. Our rural work will have to proceed under these conditions. Therefore, rural work must also be learned afresh. However, as compared with urban work, rural work is easy to learn. Urban work is more difficult and is the main subject you are studying. If our cadres cannot quickly master the administration of cities, we shall encounter extreme difficulties. Consequently you must settle all other problems in February and use the whole month of March to learn how to work in the cities and in the new Liberated Areas. The Kuomintang has only one million several hundred thousand troops, scattered over a huge territory. Of course, there are still many battles to fight, but there is little possibility of such large-scale fighting as in the Huai-Hai campaign, and it may even be said that there is no such possibility and that the period of severe fighting is over. The army is still a fighting force, and in this respect there must be absolutely no relaxing; to relax would be a mistake. Nevertheless, the time has come for us to set ourselves the task of turning the army into a working force. If we do not now set ourselves this task and resolve to perform it, we shall be making an extremely big mistake. We are preparing to send 53,000 cadres south with the army, but this is a very small number. The occupation of eight or nine provinces and scores of big cities will require a huge number of working cadres, and to solve this problem the army must rely chiefly on itself. The army is a school. Our field armies of 2,100,000 are equivalent to several thousand universities and secondary schools. We have to rely chiefly on the army to supply our working cadres. You must understand this point clearly. Since severe fighting is basically over, replenishment of the army's manpower and equipment should be kept within suitable limits, and too much must not be demanded as regards quantity, quality and completeness, lest this should cause financial crisis. That is another point you should seriously consider. The above policies apply fully to the Fourth Field Army, and Comrades Lin Piao and Lo Jung-huan are likewise asked to pay attention to them. We have talked at length with Comrade Kang Sheng and asked him to hurry to your place by the 12th to confer with you. After conferring, please inform us promptly by telegram of your views and what you propose to do. The Eastern China Bureau and the Eastern China Military Area Headquarters should move at once to Hsuchow to work jointly with the General Front Committee [2] and with the Front Committee of the Third Field Army in a concentrated effort to plan the march to the south. Turn all your rear-area work over to the Shantung Sub-Bureau.

NOTES

1. The Second and Third Field Armies had planned to advance the date of crossing the Yangtse River from April to March 1949. The crossing was postponed to late April because of the peace negotiations with the reactionary Kuomintang government.

2. In order to meet the needs of the Huai-Hai campaign, the Revolutionary Military Commission of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China decided on November 16, 1948 to form a General Front Committee consisting of Comrades Liu Po-cheng, Chen Yi, Teng Hsiao-ping, Su Yu and Tan Chen-lin, with Comrade Teng Hsiao-ping as secretary, to assume unified leadership of the Central Plains Field Army and the Eastern China Field Army and to exercise command over military affairs and operations on the Huai-Hai front.