

## BUILD A POWERFUL PEOPLE'S AIR FORCE

*March 10, 1950*

Having seized political power, we are now beginning to build an air force for our own country.

What are the tasks of our Air Force? First of all, it should, in co-ordination with our other armed forces, liberate Taiwan and Hainan Island and establish initial control over part of China's territorial waters and air. Then, on this basis, we will gradually build a completely modern and powerful people's air force that is capable of fully controlling all our territorial waters and air space and of repulsing all possible aggressors. Each member of the Air Force should understand manifestation of bureaucratism deserves our close attention.

We are confident that we can build such an air force. When we began to build the Army, we did so under extremely adverse conditions, but we finally overcame all sorts of difficulties and established a strong Army of more than four million men. The domestic and international situations are now much better than at that time. Although we don't have many planes now, are short of personnel and face other difficulties, we are fully confident that we can overcome the difficulties and build a strong people's air force.

A key to our effort's success is mastering appropriate skills which, in a sense, can be decisive. If we are good at everything except technical skills, we cannot complete our task. In air battles, victory or defeat is more often than not decided in a minute or even a second. Only by being professionally competent can we defeat the enemy. Otherwise we will lose. Therefore, everyone should master the appropriate skills. Political personnel should also familiarize themselves with these skills because you yourselves should know something about

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Speech at a conference on political work in the Air Force of the Chinese People's Liberation Army.

the skills you require others to learn. Most of the cadres in the Air Force have been transferred from the Army and are not yet familiar with the relevant skills. It doesn't matter. Hard study will lead to their mastery. We should strive to learn what we don't know and make constant efforts to perfect what knowledge we have already acquired. We should learn not only how to fly and repair planes, but also how to make them. We must conscientiously learn science in order to put our aircraft industry on a solid basis. Within three to five years we must change from non-professionals to professionals and, in time, be able to come up with inventions and innovations. This is not an exacting requirement. You political workers must ensure that it is met. You must ensure not only that members of our Air Force are politically faithful, reliable and courageous and firm, but also that they master the necessary skills. In other words, they should be competent both politically and professionally.

I understand that some of you have not yet settled down in your jobs. This is wrong. When the situation was unstable, cadres were frequently transferred and they suffered ideological uncertainties. Now that the overall situation has been stabilized, there will no longer be many job transfers. Everyone should be clear on this issue and make long-term plans instead of cherishing illusions of one sort or another. Yours is an excellent profession that entails a high level of proficiency. You should settle down, work hard, become professionally competent and perform your duties well. The question now is not whether there is a future in this job but how to master the appropriate skills. We are going to train a large number of pilots to meet our needs. This will require all of you to study with concentration and not give up after a few days. The people place great hopes on our Air Force and have spent a lot of money on it. If we fail to study hard we will let them down. This must be made clear to all members. If they master the appropriate skills and are clear about their glorious task, they will naturally settle into their work.

We must not only enable the cadres to work single-mindedly but also enable the cadets to keep their minds on their studies. Constant effort should be made to improve study conditions. We must make sure that we do a good job of remoulding individuals ideologically, so as to foster and fortify their revolutionary world outlook of fearing no self-sacrifice and wholeheartedly serving the people. Organizationally, we promise to transfer qualified people to you, but this alone

is not enough. It is also necessary to ensure their ideological calibre, and herein lies an important task of all of you political workers.

Now that our forces are expanding and schools have been set up, the number of new cadres and young intellectuals has increased and will continue to do so. We should make every effort to unite with and take good care of them. They may be inexperienced politically and ideologically, but they are warmhearted and enthusiastic, open to what is new and eager to improve. They are, in short, young and promising. We should, therefore, set great store by them. As for the small number whose general education is poor and who are not professionally skilled, we should help them patiently. Some people are faint-hearted and afraid of fighting. That doesn't matter. Bravery is not something innate. It builds up through constant practice. Let them be tempered step by step in practice and, once they become highly competent, they will be brave.

With recent developments, we have enlisted a large number of the Kuomintang's technical personnel. This has confronted us with an important political task: We must win them over and remould them. Generally speaking, those who revolted against the Kuomintang and came to us have a certain degree of political awareness. They took this action because they could not stand the corrupt practices of the Kuomintang, or because they realized that its end was near. Take, for example, Liu Shanben<sup>211</sup> and some others who came over to our side. Through political studies, they have all become excellent comrades and are now very active in their work. We should unite not only with those who have already come over to us, but also with those who are coming over now or will do so in the future. This is an important part of our political work. It is true that they bring with them some ideas and habits from the old society, but, instead of rejecting or discriminating against them, we should painstakingly educate them. Only if we do this can they be helped to gradually rid themselves of their old ideas and habits and gain a new ideological consciousness and a new work style characterized by wholehearted service to the people. Political workers should set an example and conscientiously follow the policy of uniting with, educating and ideologically remoulding the personnel in question. For the Air Force alone, we will have to take over some ten thousand people after nationwide liberation. This is not a small figure. These people are professionally competent to a certain extent. If we are conscientious and do well in uniting with, educating and ideologically remoulding them

and if we make proper use of their ability, they can contribute to the development of our Air Force.

Running an air force is a precise military science. It cannot be done well unless we streamline its organizational structure and personnel, which can improve efficiency and save money to be used more appropriately elsewhere. The organization of the Air Force need not be the same as that of the Army, which includes headquarters and political, logistical and health departments and so on and so forth. Since most of you are stationed in the suburbs, you can use regular urban facilities. In employing people, choose the best. Under no circumstances accept unqualified persons. We don't stress numbers. We stress ability, proficiency and efficiency. If our organization is unwieldy and there are too many unqualified people, too much time will have to be devoted to personnel matters, which will reduce efficiency or even be counter-productive. That is to say, you will have to carry a heavy burden.

We have set up the Air Force Headquarters, and now we have a certain number of planes, airfields and maintenance shops. We should do our best to manage them well. These alone, however, are far below our requirements. We must also set up air divisions and corps, and build more planes, airfields and maintenance shops. You should, therefore, run things well, learn scientific management, use your minds better, work creatively and economically and strive to do a good job. All this will help transform our wishes into reality at an early date.

Of course we don't mean that we face no difficulties whatsoever. We lack experience and material resources, and the United States and Chiang Kai-shek are plotting sabotage. We should not be afraid of difficulties, however, but try to surmount them. The Chinese revolution shows that all successes are achieved by overcoming difficulties. Do not expect to reap where you have not sown. Do whatever needs to be done. We cannot afford to lose any time in building our Air Force. We must do the job well, whatever the basis we have to build on and whatever the difficulties we face. Ours is a vast country with abundant resources and a population of 475 million. And we have the correct leadership of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and of Comrade Mao Zedong. We shall be able, provided we work unremittingly, to overcome diverse difficulties and succeed in building a powerful, modern air force.