

BUILD THE NAVY, DEFEND OUR COASTS

September 11, 1951

Our Navy was established only two years after the founding of the People's Republic of China. Although not yet strong enough, it has been built along modern lines. Our Army, which is now a powerful force, has grown from small to large, from weak to strong. So we believe that with time and effort the Chinese people will similarly build a navy as powerful as the Army, one that will be equally brave and skilled in battle.

It is not that China had no navy in the past, but that the country had no effective coastal defence to speak of. Today, we have a people's navy. Though newly established with very few warships and inadequate equipment and though much has to be done from scratch, our Navy has assumed the glorious task of safeguarding the Chinese coasts. It is now our primary job in national defence to safeguard our coastline and defend our territorial waters. This is a difficult task requiring the effort of the commanders and fighters of the whole Navy and its co-ordination with the Army and the Air Force. During my current visit I have seen the great progress you comrades have made in all areas through concerted effort.

Though newly established, our Navy has a sound foundation because of its close connection with the Army in its groundwork. Now a powerful force, our Army has fully demonstrated its might in overthrowing the reactionary Kuomintang rule and driving the imperialists out of China. Our new-born Navy adheres to the fine traditions of the Army because a large number of competent people have been transferred to it from the latter, a factor that has been a great help to the building of the Navy. The one disadvantage is that many of our Navy comrades know little about naval techniques. Therefore, they must work hard to learn. Those of you whom the Party has transferred

Speech at the First Conference on Political Work in the Navy of the Chinese People's Liberation Army.

to the Navy should regard your present work as a glorious mission and be prepared to remain with the Navy for a long time. Every commander or fighter should learn anew and try to master modern naval techniques, adapt himself to life at sea and develop himself into a stalwart sailor.

Our present conference is concerned with political work in the Navy. The primary thing in such work is to ensure the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party over the Navy and see that all its servicemen are faithful to the people and the motherland and strictly observe revolutionary discipline. It is important to make sure that all commanders and fighters master modern technical know-how. For instance, I have observed the technical training in the Artillery School, where an advanced method has been adopted. This is a concrete and practical training method that is very good and should be widely popularized. Political work should play a role in this, raising everyone's enthusiasm for study and helping everyone to master the use of artillery as quickly as possible.

We had no artillery at all during the guerrilla war, nor did we properly value captured artillery pieces. However, we began to value them when their effectiveness became evident in the major campaigns at the later stage of the War of Liberation (1946-49). Navy being quite different from the Army, artillery plays a particularly important role in war at sea. Artillery is extensively used while hand-to-hand combat is rare or even not needed. If we have coastal guns, torpedoes, and warships equipped with appropriate types of artillery, along with cover by the Air Force, we can defeat any enemy attack from the sea. We must, therefore, pay attention to the training of naval artillerymen. At the same time, the coastal artillery positions must be resolutely defended. In ground wars of the past, our Army did not take the seizure of cities as its main objective because it wanted to wipe out the enemy's effective strength first. The Navy, however, is different, its tasks being to safeguard the front line of our national defence and to annihilate the enemy at sea. The coastal naval artillerymen must, therefore, have solid and permanent fortifications. In addition to their routine drills, these men must constantly reinforce their fortifications. Indeed, construction of the strongest defence fortifications for long-term use should be left to the coastal artillerymen and marines, because in peace-time they do not participate in many troop manoeuvres, nor do they have many combat duties. This will enable us to build good coastal defence works at less cost. Some peo-

ple have said — and rightly — that artillery is the “God of War”. Stress should continue to be laid on artillery in modern warfare. Political work in our Navy must, therefore, ensure the training of skilled artillerymen of a high political calibre.

Is the Navy required to do mass work? The answer is Yes. Since its main contacts are with the large numbers of fishermen, the Navy should do good political work among these people and try to raise their political and cultural levels so that they can serve as scouts and guerrillas when necessary. Remember that in addition to mastering combat skills, you must keep close contact with the masses and win their respect and support. Only thus can you achieve victory in war.

The Navy has another task in political work, that is, to ensure the success of its war production, mainly the manufacture of warships. Though we are not yet able to make heavy warships, we should learn to make gunboats and small warships. We can do this because we have both workers and shipyards. Results may not be up to par at the outset, but the experience we gain will facilitate further development.

For some years to come, our Navy will not have heavy landing craft, heavy warships or aircraft carriers. As a result, we can only adopt the policy of strategic defence. Of course we don't want pure defence. There should also be offensive tactics in defence. Speedboats and submarines working with aircraft and artillery cover are most powerful on both the offence and the defence. Possessing strong coastal fortifications, our comrades in the Navy should have confidence and make determined efforts to wipe out any invaders in co-ordination with both our ground and air forces.

Our country has rich natural resources and a large population. Our people are wise, diligent and courageous. We must do our utmost to safeguard our great and beloved motherland and our people. The imperialists provoked the First and Second World Wars. If they dare to start another, they will meet with even more ignominious defeat.