

1949

Speeches/Documents

Title: Letter to Peng Dehuai and the Northwest Bureau

Author: Mao Zedong

Date: November 14, 1949

Source: *The Writings of Mao Zedong, 1949-1976: September 1945 - December 1955* Michael Y. M. Kau, John K. Leung pg.33-34

Description:

Source: *Shuxin*, pp. 349-350. Peng Dehuai was at this time deputy commander-in-chief of the People's Liberation Army and first secretary of the Northwest Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC. For more complete biographical information on Peng, see text Aug. 15, 1959(2), note 3. *Comrade Dehuai and the Northwest Bureau*:

According to the information submitted repeatedly by the Qinghai Provincial [Party] Committee, the remnants of [the forces of] Bandit Ma ¹ have been fanning up fires among the masses in many places and organizing a resistance. At the imminent Lanzhou conference, please pay serious attention to this. ² In having the various provincial, [special] district and *xian* [Party] committees focusing on the arduous job [of uniting and organizing] the masses and in all such work upholding [the principle of] equality among the nationalities, the government organs at all levels should, in accordance with the size and ratio of [minority] nationality populations, allocate quotas and absorb in large numbers those members of the Hui nationality and other minority nationalities who are capable of cooperating with us into taking part in government work. In the present period they should organize, across the board, coalition governments, i.e., united front governments. Within [the framework of] such a cooperation, minority nationality cadres will be nurtured in large numbers. Furthermore, the provincial [Party] committees of Qinghai, Gansu, Xinjiang, Ningxia and Shaanxi, and the [special] district [Party] committees of all places where there are minority nationalities ought to form training classes for minority nationality cadres, or cadre training schools. Please give this a good deal of attention. It is impossible to thoroughly resolve the problem of the minority nationalities and to totally isolate the nationalistic reactionaries without a large number of Communist cadres who are from minority nationality backgrounds.

Have all the comrades of the Northwest Bureau arrived in Lanzhou? On what day will your conference commence? The agenda for this conference is very full, and I am afraid that the meeting must be held for a week or so. You also need to make a decision as to where the political center of the Northwest should be located from now on--should it be in Xian? or Lanzhou? Please inform me of the major items on your agenda.

Please ask General Wang Zhen ³ to report to us.

Mao Zedong November 14

Notes

1. This refers to Ma Bufang (b. 1903) who was governor of Qinghai Province under the Nationalist government in 1938-49. As governor he introduced an efficient government to that province which was predominantly populated by the Moslem (Hui) minority nationality. In 1943 he became commander-in-chief of Chiang Kai-shek's Fortieth Army Group and in 1945 deputy chairman of Chiang's northwest headquarters and a member of the KMT's Central Executive Committee. He became head of the northwest headquarters in 1949 when his erstwhile superior Zhang Zhizhong went over to the Communist side. In late July of that year, however, Ma left for Hong Kong, and soon thereafter the capital cities of Qinghai--Lanzhou and Xining--fell to the Communists. Mao was referring to the fact that in spite of his physical absence, Ma continued to have influence over the forces in Qinghai Province, mostly military leaders who had previous affiliations with the KMT and some of whom wished for Hui autonomy in the region. For more biographical information on Ma, see H. Boorman et al., eds. (1968), II, pp. 474-475.
2. According to the source, this refers to the enlarged meeting of the Northwest Bureau of the

Central Committee of the CPC, held in Lanzhou in November 1949.

3. Wang Zhen (a.k.a. Wang Zhenlin, Wang Zhenting, b. 1909) was at this time the commander and political commissar of the First Army Group of the First Field Army of the PLA. Having joined the Communist Youth League in 1927, Wang rose through the CPC ranks as a labor trainer and organizer. In the early 1930s, having armed organized labor groups in the Hunan area (groups which were later absorbed into the regular armed forces of the Communist Red Army), Wang began his career as a brilliant political officer of the Communist military units. During the Long March, he reached northern Shaanxi as political commissar of the Sixth Army Corps under Xiao Ke. In the late 1930s he led his troops in productive labor in the Yanan area, and he was considered a model officer whose soldiers were equally adept at productive work as at combat duties. This apparently stemmed from his earlier experience as a labor movement organizer. At the time of this letter the First Army Group under his command was pushing into Xinjiang, and later Mao would cite his contribution to that effort, especially his ability, again, in combining productive and constructive labor and military action in the area. (See text Apr. 6, 1952, note 1, see also text Dec. 5, 1949.) Wang remained the ranking military and political officer in that region until August 1952. For more biographical information on Wang, see N. Wales (1952), pp. 90-101, and D. Klein and A. Clark, eds. (1971), II, pp. 889-894. Here Mao used the salutation *tai* for Wang Zhen, which usually is employed for a government or military official.

In a telegram to Peng Dehuai and the Northwest Bureau on 14 November 1949, Mao Zedong pointed out that the policy of national equality and national unity should be upheld in all work in the minority nationality areas. We should encourage large numbers of people from among the minority nationalities who can cooperate with the Communist Party to join our government work. He emphatically pointed out that “without large numbers of communist cadres of minority nationality origin, it would be impossible to thoroughly solve the question of nationalities and totally isolate the national reactionaries.” This telegram was of far-reaching significance to minority nationality work. To direct the peaceful liberation of the two biggest minority nationality regions including Xinjiang and Tibet, Mao Zedong drafted a number of telegrams providing the minority nationality areas with the correct guiding ideology to properly deal with the complicated contradictions and implement the party’s nationality policies. While garrisoning troops in the minority nationality areas, Mao Zedong repeatedly emphasized, they should neither disturb the local people nor increase their burden. All military supplies including grain will be provided by the Central People’s Government.