September 20, 1950
Telegram from Zhou Enlai to Ni Zhiliang

Citation:

Summary:
China approves of Kim Il Sung's idea of fighting a protracted war, and gives advice on military strategies that will make a protracted war possible.

Credits:
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Original Language:
Chinese

Contents:
- English Translation
- Scan of Original Document
Comrade Ni Zhiliang:

This is to acknowledge receipt of the September 18 telegram. Please tell Comrade Kim Il Sung: We think your idea of fighting a protracted war is correct. The courage of the North Korean army and masses is admirable. Enemy numbers will probably increase at Inchon, the purpose of which is to extend their lines to the east and cut North Korea's north-south transportation lines and also press on towards the 38th Parallel. The People's Army must do all it can to hold the area north of the 38th Parallel; [only in this way] will it be possible to carry on a protracted war.

Therefore, please think about the question of how to preserve [your] main forces under the general policy of persisting in relying on one’s own efforts and fighting for a long period of time so that the enemy can be destroyed one by one. At present, [your] main force directly faces the enemy’s positions and both sides hold their ground. This means much consumption [of resources.] And if the enemy seizes Seoul, there is the danger that the People’s Army’s route of retreat will be cut off.

Therefore, it seems appropriate that the main force of the People’s Army should concentrate [but maintain] mobility, seek the enemy’s weak points and destroy the enemy part by part. In battles, [you should] concentrate military strength. In every battle, pin down large numbers of the enemy in divided branches with less military strength or firepower while using more military strength [three to five times] and firepower [at least twice] with absolute superiority to surround and annihilate fewer enemies (e.g. one regiment) that have been divided by us. In battles, division of one’s forces should be avoided; most of all to be avoided is putting the enemy to flight or blocking the enemy instead of destroying the enemy’s effective strength. So long as you can wipe out the enemy’s effective strength, annihilating only one regiment or one battalion is still good. A big victory results from the accumulation of small victories. They will progressively weaken the enemy and are beneficial in protracted war. If the US army's firepower and equipment is strong and it is temporarily difficult to charge in and break it up, it is suitable to consider targeting the Syngman Rhee puppet army [by] concentrating [your] main force and annihilating one or two regiments every time, [thereby] annihilating one or two divisions every few months. In half a year, the puppet army can be destroyed completely. These lackeys of American imperialism will be cut off, which will isolate the American imperialists and then [you can] annihilate them separately. Under the principles of protracted war, [one] must fully take into account the difficult side. Long term planning must be made in all aspects of mobilization and usage of manpower, material resources and financial resources and lower-level subordinates must be made to avoid the mentality of putting all one's eggs in one basket. The enemy seeks a quick decision [in the war] and is afraid of it becoming protracted, while our People’s Army should avoid quick decisions and can only gain victory in a protracted war. As friends and comrades, we provide the above for your reference. Correct or not, [I] request [your] further consideration and reply.

Zhou Enlai

September 20
关于朝鲜人民军作战方针的电报

（一九五〇年九月二十日）

倪志亮[2]同志：

步将敌人削弱下去，而利于长期作战。如果美军火力配备强，一时难于突入分割，则宜考虑先以李承晚⑤伪军为对象，集中主力，每次歼灭其一两个团，每月歼灭其一两个师，半年后即可尽歼伪军，剪去美帝爪牙，使美帝陷于孤立，然后各个歼灭之。在持久战的原则下，必须充分地估计到困难方面，一切人力物力财力的动员和使用，必须处处作长期打算，防止上级发生孤注一掷的情绪。敌人要求速决害怕持久，而我人民军则速决既不可能惟有以持久战争取胜利。以上所陈，系站在朋友和同志的立场提出供你们参考。是否有当，尚祈考虑见复。

周 恩 来
九月二十日
根据手稿刊印。

注 释
① 本篇用仿宋体字排印的是毛泽东加写和改写的文字。用楷体字排印的是刘少奇加写和改写的文字。
② 倪志亮，时任中国驻朝鲜大使。
③ 金日成，时任朝鲜民主主义人民共和国首相。
④ 汉城，即首尔。
⑤ 李承晚，时任大韩民国总统。