

January 8, 1958

Minutes of Conversation between Zhou Enlai and Soviet Ambassador Yudin (Excerpt)

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Summary:

Zhou Enlai discusses the withdrawal of the Chinese People's Volunteers from North Korea with Ambassador Pavel Yudin and North Korea's views on the security situation on the Korean Peninsula.

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Contents:

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[...]

Minutes of Conversation between Zhou Enlai and Soviet Ambassador [Pavel] Yudin
(unreviewed)

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Translator and documentation: Fang Zu'An

[...]

Premier [Zhou Enlai]: Today, I want to discuss with you the Korean issue. In Moscow, Chairman Mao [Zedong] discussed the withdrawal of our [People's] Volunteer Army from [North] Korea with Premier Kim Il Sung. During the first talk, Kim Il Sung was afraid that, at present, it would not be good to withdraw the [People's] Volunteer Army. During the second talk, Kim Il Sung agreed to the withdrawal of the [People's] Volunteer Army, believing that this could be a problem for the United States and would be beneficial [to North Korea]. Presently, United Nations forces are still garrisoned in South Korea, so if we withdraw, this could push a number of countries to demand that their units in the United Nations forces also be withdrawn. The United States will be isolated. Currently, the United States, seeking to reduce the burden of military assistance to Syngman Rhee, is pushing Rhee to reduce his armed forces. Syngman Rhee, however, is unwilling to reduce his armed forces, using the pretext that North Korea's armed forces are strong and have [the backing of] the [People's] Volunteer Army. If we withdraw, it will have an impact. On the other hand, after we withdraw, the Korean People's Army can take over the defense of the 38th parallel and gradually gain experience. At the same time, we will withdraw the [People's] Volunteer Army in phases and garrison the withdrawn forces along the Yalu River. If something were to occur, and if the [North] Korean government believed it to be necessary, we [could still] cross the river and strike the enemy at any time.

[Pavel] Yudin: Is Premier Zhou referring to a withdrawal of all forces?

Premier: Yes, a complete withdrawal. At the time [of the conversations in Moscow], Premier Kim Il Sung indicated that he would reply back to Chairman Mao after he returned [to North Korea] and had discussions with the Central Committee [of the Korean Workers' Party]. After Kim Il Sung returned [to North Korea], he sent two telegrams to Chairman Mao. In the first telegram he said that the Central Committee of the Korean Workers' Party agreed that we withdraw the [People's] Volunteer Army. In the second telegram, he proposed two methods and asked for our opinion. One opinion is for the [North] Korean government to issue a statement requesting the withdrawal of forces from both sides [North Korea and South Korea], and then the Chinese government would express agreement and support [for this proposal]. The other method is for the Chinese government to issue a statement proposing that both sides withdraw forces, and then the [North] Korean government would express their agreement and support [for this proposal]. We agreed to adopt the first measure. Therefore, we produced a proposal for withdrawing the [People's] Volunteer Army from [North] Korea. (The above described proposal was personally handed [to Pavel Yudin].) We wish [to hear] the opinion of the Central Committee of the CPSU and the [Soviet] government before replying to Premier Kim Il Sung. We plan to hold the National People's Congress from January 25 until early February, and therefore a delegation of our government will plan to visit [North] Korea in late February.

Yudin: I will immediately report the above situation back to my country.

[...]