

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