

September 27, 1950
Telegram from Feng Xi (Stalin) to Matveyev
(Razuvayev V.N.) and T.F. Shtykov

Citation:

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Summary:

Stalin blames the recent success of the UN forces in Seoul on the inefficiency of the KPA's Frontline Command and Soviet military advisors, as well erroneous use of tank tactics and overall combat strategy. Stalin provides a detailed list instructing military advisors, and especially Vasilyev, how to deploy and manage Korean troops around Seoul.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

VKP(b) CC

P78/73

27 September 1950

[To:] Cmrds Malenkov, Bulganin, Vasilevsky

Extract Minutes from Protocol #78 of the Meeting of the Politburo of the CC VKP(b)
Decision dated September 27, 1950

#73. - Questions of Korea.

Approve of the attached directive to Comrades Matveyev and Shtykov.

Secretary of the C[entral] C[ommittee]

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Attachment to

#73 (op) of the Politburo Protocol #78

Top Secret

Pyongyang

TO MATVEYEV [RAZUVAYEV V.N.]

TO SHTYKOV

The serious predicament in the area of Seoul and in the South-East in which the Korean People's Army has found itself lately has to a great extent been caused by a series of grave mistakes made by the Frontline Command, the Commands of the Army Groups and army groupings in matters related to command and control over troops, as well as to the tactics of their combat use in particular.

It is our military advisers who are even more to blame for these mistakes. Our military advisers failed to implement scrupulously and in a timely fashion the order of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief for the withdrawal of four divisions from the central front to the area of Seoul despite the fact that at the moment of adopting this decision such a possibility existed. Consequently, they lost seven days which brought about an enormous tactical advantage in the vicinity of Seoul to the U.S. troops. Had they pulled out these divisions on time, this could have changed the military situation around Seoul considerably. Odd battalions and separate detachments arriving in the vicinity of Seoul, unprepared for combat, could not produce any effect because of lack of coordination and communications with the staff. The division which arrived from the southeast was thrown into combat in a disorganized manner and in odd units, which made it easier for the enemy to decimate and annihilate it. As we directed earlier, you should have deployed this division for combat at the line northeast and east of Seoul, reorganize it there, give its soldiers at least one day of respite, prepare it for battle and only afterwards introduce these troops into combat.

One cannot help taking serious note of erroneous and absolutely inadmissible tactics for tank use in combat. Lately you have used tanks in combat without preliminary artillery strikes aimed at clearing the field for tank maneuvers. As a consequence, the enemy easily destroys your tanks. Our military advisers who have personal experience from the Great Patriotic War must be aware that such ignorant use of tanks leads to their loss.

One cannot help noticing the strategic illiteracy of our advisers and their incompetence in intelligence matters. They failed to grasp the strategic importance of

the enemy's assault landing in Inch'on, denied the gravity of its implications, while Shtykov even suggested that we should bring to trial the author of an article in the "Pravda" about the U.S. assault landing. This blindness and lack of strategic experience led to the fact that they doubted the necessity of redeploying troops from the South toward Seoul, as well as procrastinated over their redeployment and slowed it down considerably, thereby losing a week to the enemy's enjoyment.

The assistance provided by our military advisers to the Korean Command in such paramount matters as communications, command and control over troops, organization of intelligence and combat is exceptionally weak. As a result of this, the KPA troops, in essence, are beyond control: they are engaged in combat blindly and cannot arrange the coordination between the various armed services in battle. One can tolerate such a situation during a successful offensive, but one cannot allow this to happen when the frontline situation is worsening.

You must elucidate all these points to our military advisers, and first of all to Vasilyev.

In the present military situation, in order to provide assistance to the Korean Command, especially in the questions of an organized pullout of the KPA troops from the southeast and the prompt organization of a new defense front to the east, south, and north of Seoul, our military advisers must arrange the following:

1. The pullout of the main forces must be conducted under the protection of strong rear guards dispatched from the divisions and capable of rendering serious resistance to the enemy. This can be achieved if the command over the rear guards is assigned to commanders with considerable military experience, if the rear guards are strengthened with standing and antitank artillery, field engineering units, and, if possible, with tanks.

2. The rear guards must engage in combat from defensive line to defensive line, making broad use of engineering fortifications, including mines and materials at hand.

The rear guards must act decisively and actively in order to gain the time required for the pullout of the main forces.

3. The bulk of the troops of the divisions, to the extent possible, must be withdrawn in a compact manner, ready to force their way forward, but not in separate and odd units. The major force must dispatch strong forward guards armed with artillery and, if possible, with tanks.

4. Tanks must be used only in joint action with infantry and only after preliminary artillery fire.

5. One must dispatch forward detachments to occupy and hold ravines, bridges, ferries, passes and important road junctions located along the way of the movement of the major forces until the latter pass through them.

6. Special attention must be paid to the questions of the organization of field intelligence, as well as flank protection and maintenance of communications between marching troops' columns.

7. When preparing for defense, one should avoid stretching out the troops along the entire front line but tightly cover the main directions and set up strong reserve units for active actions.

8. When setting up communications with troops via the line of the Korean Command, one must utilize radio with the use of codes.

In the future, while organizing the work of our military advisers in accordance with this directive, you must undertake all necessary measures so that none of our military advisers will be captured by the enemy, as was directed earlier.

Report on the implementation of this directive.

FENG XI [STALIN]