

**July 12, 1951**  
**Cable No. 21726, Mao Zedong to Cde. Filippov**  
**[Stalin]**

**Citation:**

"Cable No. 21726, Mao Zedong to Cde. Filippov [Stalin]", July 12, 1951, Wilson Center Digital Archive, APRF. <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/117415>

**Summary:**

Mao sends Stalin a brief report concerning the 38th parallel and troop withdrawal during the armistice negotiations from Le Kenong.

**Credits:**

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**Original Language:**

Russian

**Contents:**

Translation - English

SECOND MAIN DIRECTORATE OF THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE SOVIET ARMY

CABLE N° 21726

Copy N° 1 to Cde. Stalin

N° 2 to Cde. Stalin

from [BEIJING] received 0100 13 July 1951

Copy N° 2

[Stamp: SUBJECT TO RETURN  
to the IV Unit OS VKP(b) CC  
Incoming N° 542/2370/shs 13 July 1951]

SERIES "G"  
to Cde. FILIPPOV [Stalin]

Cde. Filippov!

I am sending you brief report N° 3 received from Cde. Li Kenong for your information.

"To Cde. Mao Zedong. Copy to Cde. Kim Il Sung.

I submit brief report N° 3 about the progress of the conference.

Minor issues were resolved first at today's meeting of the conference (the issue of communications) but as before the fight was mainly waged about the issues of the 38th parallel and the withdrawal of troops from Korea.

Below I cite an abbreviated transcript of the statement of Joy, the head of the American delegation. In his statement at 1100 11 July 1951 Joy said:

"I want to dwell on the criticism to which your side subjected the agenda we proposed. The Communist representatives stated that our second point of the agenda does not correspond to the formulation of the issue at this conference. This issue is about the right of the International Red Cross to visit POW camps. Putting off the resolution of this issue for one day can increase the unnecessary suffering of the prisoners by a great deal. The activity of the Red Cross covers all prisoners and is done in the interests of all prisoners regardless of their citizenship. This organization's aid to prisoners is based on the principles of humanity and is not of a military nature. The mutual exchange of prisoners is a military issue, but the work of the Red Cross contains nothing military.

In July 1950 the North Korean government declared that it wanted to implement the principles of the Geneva Convention about prisoners into effect. One of the principles of the Convention says that the representatives of the International Red Cross are permitted to visit POW camps. The Korean government should have implemented this principle long ago, however it has not done this.

As regards the statement that your delegation considers it unnecessary to include the third point in the agenda which we proposed about limiting discussion to just purely

military issues regarding Korea, our delegation proposes to include this point in the agenda and thereby limit a review of the issues at the conference in order not to lose sight of or go beyond the limits of the discussion of the issues which require resolution. Therefore no one should oppose inclusion of this point in the agenda.

Your representatives think that the fourth and fifth points we proposed are superficial. The nature and the wording of the agenda we proposed is general because we think that the work will thus promote an expedient pace for the conference.

Special attention ought to be devoted to the fourth point of the agenda we proposed. In offering the point about ceasing hostile and armed actions it is necessary to ensure conditions in which hostile or armed actions cannot be resumed. Such a guarantee is needed. Of course, this point will contain a great many issues which are impossible to give in detail and therefore we are providing a general wording.

As regards the fifth point, we already explained it at yesterday's meeting and are giving a more detailed explanation right now.

The UN delegation thinks that both sides should first of all agree on general issues without getting into details and only then discuss them in detail during the formulation of general issues.

For example, among such issues is the issue of forming a buffer zone. You propose creating a definite boundary and a definite buffer zone. We think that it is first of all necessary to decide about the common desire of both sides to create a boundary and a buffer zone and the possibility of agreeing on this issue. Then, after obtaining the agreement of both sides, [we] can move to the discussion of the issue of creating a boundary and a buffer zone and thereby achieve agreement.

We should not seek details in the agenda. Thus a decision about exactly where there should be a buffer zone should be made during the next discussion. Such an agenda does not obligate either of the sides to confine itself to its details.

We know that both sides have agreed to create a buffer zone and therefore this issue should be in the agenda as one of the general issues.

Although according to the agenda a definite decision about a buffer zone might be achieved in subsequent meetings it is however necessary to understand that the delegation of UN forces headquarters has no interest in an arbitrary boundary passing from east to west which has no military significance, does not offer any guarantee, and has no relation to the military situation in Korea (Our representatives asked the enemy representative to repeat this phrase in English).

As regards the sixth point proposed by our delegation, your side said that this issue is not at all important.

In our view, if a plenipotentiary commission concerning a cessation of hostilities is not created with an equal number of participants from both sides, then it is impossible to ensure that there will not be a resumption of hostilities and it will also be impossible to guarantee the observance of the armistice conditions.

As regards the seventh point of the agenda our delegation proposed, namely the military observer groups, these groups with an equal number of participants from both sides will be the eyes and ears of the ceasefire commission. The very important work of the ceasefire commission cannot be performed without observation. The armistice conditions will also be impossible to perform.

As regards the eighth point of the agenda we proposed this point implies a discussion of the organization of military observation groups, their authority, the facilities they observe, and to whom they submit reports. Without a discussion of these issues and without making corresponding decisions about them a delay in work might result and misunderstandings are also possible.

We think that these issues cannot be viewed as secondary and excluded from the agenda. As regards your point about the withdrawal of foreign troops we think that this issue should be resolved at higher government levels, for it goes beyond the bounds of the range of issues which ought to be discussed at this conference.

The representatives of UN forces headquarters oppose the inclusion of this point in the agenda because we are not authorized to discuss this issue. Our authority has been received only from the UN forces command.

As regards the second point proposed by your delegation we are prepared to accept it. The creation of a buffer zone is necessary. However, we think that we came here for talks about a ceasefire in a military sense. In our understanding a cessation of hostilities means an agreement by both sides to cease hostilities on certain conditions. Such an agreement about a cessation of hostilities between military leaders does not at all affect an agreement which might be reached by governments about political or territorial issues. Therefore the commander-in-chief of the UN forces is not interested in any arbitrary line on a map which has no military significance for the current situation.

It is not in our interest to hold talks on military issues about an arbitrary line which has no relation to either tactics or the current military situation, nor also the ground relief".

(Having said this, Joy continued: "We only agree to include your points in the agenda". When the head of our delegation demanded the last phrase be repeated, Joy immediately declared that he was taking his words back).

Nam II asked:

1. I do not understand at all what relation there is between a visit to prisoners by Red Cross representatives and the issue of the cessation of hostilities. Please explain what is better for the prisoners, a visit to them by Red Cross representatives or the quickest possible return home?

2. As regards the third point you proposed which provides for the discussion of issues relating only to Korea, what other issues besides Korean ones might be discussed at this conference?

3. I do not understand at all what you mean by enemy when speaking of hostile and armed acts mentioned in the fourth point of your agenda.

4. Analyzing your fifth point, you said that it is impossible to achieve a ceasefire without provisions ensuring that hostilities and armed actions would not resume. What does this mean? We want to know, how a ceasefire can be ensured without a withdrawal of foreign troops?

5. What is a ceasefire commission and observer group? Without a clarification of these concepts there will be difficulties when discussing the agenda (Soon afterwards a one hour 35-minute break was announced until 1300).

Joy said, "I want right now to reply to the questions asked by the head of your delegation this morning. You ask, is a return home better for the prisoners or a visit by Red Cross representatives. You think it is impossible to do this simultaneously. That is wrong. Our delegation supports the proposal that Red Cross representatives visit prisoners, but also that prisoners return home. If you agree, then Red Cross representatives can visit them beginning tomorrow and while the prisoners await repatriation.

On 13 July 1950 in a telegram addressed to the UN Secretary [General] the North Korean government expressed readiness to implement the principles of the Geneva Convention. One of these principles is permission for Red Cross representatives to visit prisoners. We do not understand why you disagree [protivorechite] with these decisions and principles of humanity.

You ask for an explanation of what hostilities and armed actions mean. In our understanding a cessation of hostilities means a ceasefire in Korea in all forms, a ceasefire means a halt to an increase in the strength of armed units (including their plans, relocation, rearmament, and replacement) and of the threat of armed attack".

Nam Il interrupted Joy, saying, "It seems to me that you did not correctly understand the question I raised. We understand very well what a cessation of hostilities and a ceasefire mean. I am interested in what you have in mind by measures and conditions to ensure that the hostilities you mentioned in your statement are not resumed".

Joy said, "I will respond to that question later. An agreement alone about a cessation of hostilities being put into effect on the basis of conditions agreed to by both sides will possibly allow both sides to increase their strength during an armistice. Therefore if only ceasefire measures are carried out and there are no provisions guaranteeing the hostilities will not be resumed then the hostilities which resume after an armistice might be more severe.

You ask what might guarantee that hostilities do not resume in the event that foreign troops are not withdrawn from Korea.

We think that this guarantee consists of the following:

1. In the creation of a military ceasefire commission and a corresponding number of observer groups.
2. In the creation of a buffer zone.
3. In the achievement of an agreement between the commanding generals of both warring sides about the ceasefire conditions (including the authority of the ceasefire commission) in order to ensure the observance of the decisions made by both sides.

The ceasefire commission should be created by agreement between the commanding generals of both sides with the participation of an equal number of representatives from both sides.

Within the boundaries of the established areas commission members should have the right of free movement in order to be able to monitor the implementation of the joint decisions of both sides about the ceasefire. The commission should report instances of violations of the ceasefire agreement to the headquarters of both sides at the same time as work is done to observe and provide assistance.

The military observation groups are bodies attached to the ceasefire commission

which observe whether real work is being done by both sides to carry out the provisions of the ceasefire agreement".

Joy said, "I understood that you do not want to change the wording of the second point of the agenda you proposed. You do not want to attach a general meaning to it".

Nam Il asked, "What is your opinion?"

Joy said, "By general meaning I have in mind the fifth point of the agenda we proposed. This is the point about the buffer zone. You are proposing a line; in reality there are very many possible lines".

Nam Il said, "We have already proposed our own line to you. What line can you propose?"

Joy replied, "We are not proposing any line because essentially the issue already touches on this. As we understood, you don't want to amend the second point of the general meaning of the agenda you proposed".

Nam Il said, "Our proposal already has a general meaning".

Joy said, "As regards the second point of the agenda you proposed we cannot agree that the point you offered about some definite line be included in the agenda. We can agree to include the issue of the creation of a buffer zone in the agenda. The issue of the location and the boundaries of this zone should be resolved during the substance of the discussion of this issue. I again want to stress that this meeting does not pursue the goal of resolving issues, for example, regarding the issue of this definite line. Such issues ought to be discussed at subsequent meetings".

Nam Il said, "The 38th parallel is not any imaginary line, the 38th parallel already existed. Military operations began at this very line and therefore a ceasefire agreement also should be based on the 38th parallel. Thus this point has to be included in the agenda".

Joy said, "You have given me to understand that you are refusing to attach a general meaning to the agenda you proposed. I cannot interpret this otherwise". Li Kenong. 0130 12 July".

MAO ZEDONG

Nº 3490

12 July 1951

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Verified by: Major [signature] (Chikarev) 0230