

April 30, 1955

**Zhou Enlai's Report to the CCP Central Committee
and Mao Zedong Regarding the Cultural Cooperation
Issue**

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Summary:

Zhou Enlai reports on the various attitudes of the Bandung Conference participants towards Afro-Asian cultural cooperation.

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[To the] CCP Central Committee and Chairman [Mao Zedong]:

At the beginning of the Cultural Committee of the Asian-African Conference, the participants elected Dr. [Muhammad] Yamin, Indonesia's Minister of Culture and Education, as the Chairman, and Abyssinia as the Secretary. Then the Chairman asked the delegates of India, Indonesia, Japan, and Pakistan, which had submitted written proposals, to describe the contents of their respective proposals before discussion began.

Our tactic at the Cultural Committee was to support India and Indonesia's opinions, [omission], not to put forward a separate proposal but to appropriately express our position; not to be involved in a provocative or disruptive debate, but to repel as appropriate if a malicious slander were to be encountered. Our basic guideline was to reach an agreement, when possible, to facilitate flexible application by the Political Committee and the meeting of the delegation heads.

The proposals submitted by India, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Japan all talked about cultural and academic exchange, exchange of publications, mutual assistance for and exchange of language education, exchange of art, and exchange of news, which were general and could largely be accepted. Indonesia's proposal was the most favorable to us. The preface of the proposal strongly condemned colonialism and racial discrimination, but the proposal caused controversy as its scope was too broad, covering issues relating to society, women, health, housing, education of technical workers, etc. Japan's proposal was focused on the setup of the Asian-African Culture Prize, and the rest of the proposal was harmless. As such, we expressed our support of the proposals of India and Indonesia, and appropriately expressed approval for the useful suggestions made by Pakistan and Japan. We did this to offset the unfavorable propositions made by Pakistan and Japan.

During the discussion, the Philippines asserted that "the religious issue should be regarded as central to the cultural issue," Turkey brought up "the ideological issue," and South Vietnam argued that "communism and non-communism cannot cooperate with each other culturally," attempting to arouse a debate. But the Chairman of the Conference tactfully shifted the discussion to the drafting committee, saying, "Since Indonesia, India, Japan, and Pakistan have all submitted written proposals, these proposals should be taken as the basis for consideration, and the content of everyone's speech should also be integrated to elect a drafting committee. The drafting committee will draft the written report for further discussion." Most delegates supported this idea, [and] so did we. Turkey attempted to reject the method for the drafting committee; its purpose was to plunge the Conference into an endless debate to prevent an agreement from being reached. But Turkey's act was rejected by all.

India suggested that the drafting committee should consist of seven members, including the four nations that had submitted a written proposal—India, Pakistan, Japan, and Indonesia, as well as China, the Philippines, and Iraq. We expressed our support of this idea. But Turkey immediately argued that "since South Vietnam has an opinion, it should be included in the drafting committee." India retorted that "if South Vietnam has to take part, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam should participate as well." Later, Sudan, Egypt, and Abyssinia were added, and the drafting committee eventually comprised of twelve nations, namely India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Japan, China, Iraq, the Philippines, South Vietnam, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Egypt, Sudan, and Abyssinia. Pakistan, India, Indonesia, Iraq, and the Philippines were given the task of drafting the documents, which would be discussed by the drafting committee before being submitted to the plenary session. This method could avoid many useless debates and facilitate the reaching of a consensus; therefore, we expressed our support of this method.

In the work at the drafting committee, we adopted this attitude: We would try our

best to have the preamble focused on denouncing colonialism, and as for the concrete suggestions for cultural cooperation, we actively supported the good ones and tried our best to avoid getting involved in debates on other issues lest the reactionaries slander us for being essentially unsupportive of cultural cooperation. Furthermore, if there were certain specific suggestions unfavorable to us which were likely to be rejected by the other side, we would take appropriate action when the time came and would push them away if possible. For example, India proposed the "recognition of freedom of press and the principle of freedom of journalists in reporting and dispatching"; we did not have to tackle it head on, as Iraq and the Philippines immediately expressed objection to it; we then stated that as this issue was a hard one, its discussion might be postponed. Regarding the exchange of experience and visits among cultural groups, contacts among art delegations, and exchange of cultural envoys for festivals, everyone expressed approval; so did we. Iraq and the Philippines could not object.

Thus, from the very beginning, the attention of the drafting committee had been focused on the wording about colonialism in the preamble. Iraq and the Philippines attempted to block the use of words opposing colonialism; their attempts were vigorously rejected by Egypt, Indonesia, India, and Abyssinia. Egypt and Sudan went on to demand that the paragraph for colonialism not only include a general condemnation, but also specify the fact that in Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria, and the basic right of the people to study their own language and culture has been completely denied by the colonists. India and Indonesia further argued that "if the preamble does not make it clear that the main obstacle for Asian and African people to enhance their cultural life is colonialism, it will never be forgiven by the Asian and African people." We immediately expressed support for this opinion. After a heated debate, seeing that they could never reverse the tide, Iraq, South Vietnam, and the Philippines proposed adding the phrase "in whatever form it may be." However, India and Pakistan jointly pointed out that if this phrase was added, it would mean "the existence of colonialism in Asia and Africa." Japan then argued that it was no longer a colonial country and suggested adding "many parts" to "Asia and Africa." As a result, the final version reads: "the Asian-African Conference took note of the fact that the existence of colonialism in many parts of Asia and Africa, in whatever form it may be, [...]."

At that time, we thought that if the basic spirit of condemning colonialism had been established, if many parts of Asia and Africa had been specifically pointed out, and if colonialism's suppression of national cultures, damage to natural languages and scripts, and denial of people's right to study their own language and script had been emphatically added in the subsequent paragraphs, then colonialism's true nature in the sphere of culture had been exposed. As such, no distortion would be likely if the phrase "in whatever form it may be" was added.

Then Iraq asserted that "cultural cooperation should not be exploited as propaganda and subversive activities." We thought that if we did not attack this slanderous opinion, Iraq would not shrink back from difficulties. Therefore, we made a tough affirmation that we absolutely could not accept this wording, because it would do no good whatsoever and would only divert people's attention from the goals of the struggle against colonialism, giving American imperialism and colonialism an opportunity to drive a wedge. Therefore, it was completely unnecessary. India then spoke up to smooth things over, stating that cultural cooperation should be achieved by pursuing bilateral arrangements between governments and conform to the Five Principles and national laws and regulations, that "the danger of propaganda and subversive activities has long been eliminated," and that Iraq's opinion was unrealistic. Finally, Iraq also agreed not to include this point in the document and explained to us after the Conference that they had just "brought it up as a general point" and were not referring to any person or country.

In the last paragraph of the preamble, Iraq and the Philippines wanted to add a line

stating an objection to cultural suppression in one form or another. We immediately objected to this idea, saying that if this idea were added, a line condemning racial discrimination as a means of cultural suppression must be added too. This opinion was adopted.

As the main debate over the preamble was resolved, what came up next was the ways to implement arrangements for cultural cooperation. Japan's motion to set up an Asian-African Culture Prize was rejected and was just put on record. Indonesia's motion to establish a permanent cultural committee did not win approval and was eventually excluded from the record. Indonesia originally planned to bring up the social issue, but later dropped it out of fear of sparking controversy.

The proceedings of the cultural committee went well as India, Indonesia, and China worked closely together and supported one another. Pakistan, which had been nominated for the chairmanship, had to take a neutral stance. Egypt, Abyssinia, and Sudan supported us on many occasions. Japan, which remained aloof, expressed few viewpoints. South Vietnam did not dare to say much due to the presence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. In the end, Iraq and the Philippines were isolated. Although we did not stand out in the committee, we appropriately expressed our position, compelling Iraq and the Philippines to stop before going too far. Thus, by the time of the plenary session of the committee, Turkey [omission] could not play any significant role.