

June 15, 1965

**Record of Conversation between Premier Zhou Enlai
and Chairman Ho Chi Minh**

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Summary:

Zhou Enlai and Ho Chi Minh discuss preparations for the second Asian-African Conference and the potential participation of countries such as the Soviet Union, Malaysia, and India.

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Record of Conversation of Premier Zhou Enlai and President Ho Chi Minh
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[...]

Date: 15 June 1965

Place: Hangzhou

Premier [Zhou]: At present I am going to talk a bit about the issue of the Asian-African Conference. This Asian-African Conference comprises an initial conference of foreign ministers and the holding of another conference of the heads of the Asian and African countries. There may turn out to be over 50 countries. Some countries under French influence may not participate; some of them are also connected to the United States. They held a meeting in Cote d'Ivoire and invited Moise Kapenda Tshombe. Ben Bella asked Niger's president to persuade him, but the effort was not successful.

Another group is insufficiently qualified. Certainly not invited are South Africa, Israel, and Taiwan's Chiang Kai-shek gang. From the start the Chiang gang has not been an issue, but we have adopted a package solution. Recently, the Standing Committee also decided not to invite the South Vietnamese puppet regime, the South Korea puppet regime or Tshombe. This is the Standing Committee's decision. It still has to go through the foreign ministers conference, but Algeria already has told the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (Viet Cong) representative that they will not invite the South Vietnamese puppet regime. It has yet to be decided whether or not to invite the Viet Cong.

Chairman Ho: There is also the issue of whether or not to invite the Soviet Union and "Malaysia."

Premier: India has put the Soviet Union and "Malaysia" together; the Soviet Union is very unhappy. Whether the Soviet Union participates or not is an issue of another nature. The Soviet Union is not an Asian or African country. "Malaysia," which does not meet the qualifications, is one of the seven countries in the package decision. There are people who say that they are Asians, but the Chiang gang, the South Vietnamese puppet regime, and the South Korean puppet regime are also Asians. Tshombe, too, is an African. There is only South Africa under white rule. The second reason is one that many countries recognize; so it is with the Chiang gang, South Africa, and Israel. I have said to the United Arab Republic (UAR), we support you in your opposition to Israel, and we have not recognized Israel for 10 years. But among the Arab countries there are still five countries maintaining relations with the Chiang gang. "Malaysia" is an issue of Southeast Asia. We should mutually support and look after one another. The UAR cannot refute this. If we hold firm in not extending an invitation, and Sukarno's position remains resolute, this issue can be solved. "Malaysia" is the product of colonialism, made by Britain and the United States in collaboration. If it were still Malaya and Singapore, we could recognize it, but at present it also includes North Kalimantan. Formerly, imperialists were adept in using the method of divide and rule. At present they also use those of combine and rule as well as unite and rule.

Another issue is that of Laos. Phouma previously wrote to us, expressing his wish to participate. We consider that there are three proposals. One is that the issue be put before the foreign ministers conference, that the Lao delegation be in accord with the

standards of the Vienna Conference, and that persons from the three factions go. If not, the second proposal is that the right and center-right would be one half, and the left and center-left would be one half. The third proposal is that the two sides in Laos both participate as observers. There is the possibility that they would act to compromise, that Phouma would participate and that Souphanouvong would be there as an observer, but Souphanouvong may not necessarily agree. As I see it, the first thing is to gain the opportunity to go and later discuss qualifications. At the time of the First Asian-African Conference, the three countries of the Maghreb were observers; later they became participant countries.

One more issue is that of observers. At the time of the First Asian-African Conference, observers were active only outside the conference. For this conference, we have already decided that observers will have the right of speech, but this will only include Asian and African countries not yet independent. If Ben Bella wants to invite Quaison-Sackey, U Thant, Tito or Cuba, we say that this is the Asian-African Conference. One must be an Asian or African non-independent country's revolutionary organization to be able to participate as an observer. So, there could be 20 units there as observers. The United Nations has no connection to the Asian-African Conference, let alone to China, Vietnam or Korea. We think that Ben Bella has put forth ideas. We could have him come as a guest. Nkrumah is a man who can solve problems. After his government was reorganized, Quaison-Sackey assumed the post of foreign minister. The issue of Quaison-Sackey participating in the conference is solved. U Thant does not have a good relationship with Ne Win. He is putting out feelers, saying that Algeria has invited him and that he is going to participate in the activities for the twentieth anniversary of the San Francisco Conference. As it looks now, it would be best to have them as the guests of President Ben Bella. They would only be able to participate in such guest activities as the opening ceremony, not the main conference or small meetings. Recently, Algeria sent Yazid to visit China (at the time of the First Asian-African Conference, we were the only ones to pay him any attention). He said that Ben Bella's tone of speech is a high one.

Vice Premier Chen (hereafter "Chen"): I said that if the tone needs to be not low, then the main point is the name of the United States, or else the tone is not high. He said that the main point is the United States. I said that we do not need dollars. You are thinking about getting dollars—so you need to give the United States a hard time. Doing so, you can get a lot of dollars.

Premier: Guests will be invited through him. Each country's ambassador, as well as Americans, foreign journalists and others can come attend the ceremonies, but not the main conference or small meetings. Tanzania, Pakistan, and Cambodia approve. The UAR cannot say this is wrong.

A remaining problem is whether the Soviet Union will participate or not. The Soviet Union is not an Asian country. The First Asian-African Conference determined that. This is not an issue pertaining to any dispute between China and the Soviet Union. At the time of the First Asian-African Conference, Nehru did not approve Soviet participation, nor did he approve the participation of the Soviet Union's Asian republics. At that time, relations with the Soviets were good, and the Soviet Union by no means wanted us to propose their participation. At the preparatory conference convened in April this year in Jakarta, there was no agreement on the issue of Soviet participation. That is to say, the issue is settled. Until November last year, the Soviet Union was still saying it had the right to participate, but if its participation is considered unfavorable for the unity of Asia and Africa, then the Soviet Union may not participate. Recently, in May, India, acting under the influence of the United States, sought Soviet participation and argued with us. "New Era" has published an article saying that Soviet participation is not impossible. Malik, visiting Nigeria while I was on my visit to Tanzania, even went so far as to say that if anyone disagreed with Soviet participation, the Soviet Union would have to "strike back." The issue then

turned white hot. We are planning to send a memorandum for every country of Asia and Africa, explaining that this is not due to a dispute between China and the Soviet Union but is because the Soviet Union is not an Asian or African country. The Soviet Union's reasons are as follows: First, most of its territory lies in Asia. But its capital and most of its population are both in Europe, it is recognized as a European country, and in the United Nations it is not a member of the Asian or African regional groups. In March this year, the Soviet ambassador to France affirmed that the Soviet Union is a European country. Second, because the Soviet Union is an anti-imperialist country, it should participate. This is unpersuasive. In Europe and the Americas there are other anti-imperialist countries. Should they all participate? The Asian-African Conference is fundamentally according to geographic location. It is not the Games of the New Emerging Forces (GANEFO). There are some countries that are not anti-imperialist -- such as the Philippines, Thailand, and Japan -- that can still participate. To repeat, Soviet participation depends on the Soviet Union's voice being able to be heard. What is it calling for? It is nothing more than the same old arms reduction and peaceful coexistence. They go on to say that they will support Asian and African countries. Support mainly means making good on one's commitments; it is extraordinary to support people in Asian and African countries to be able to participate in the Asian-African Conference. Third, if the Soviet Union does not participate, the conference will be in danger of splitting apart. That is to say, the First Asian-African Conference was in no danger of splitting apart, so the Soviet Union was able not to participate. The second conference is in danger of splitting apart, so the Soviet Union must participate. In fact, at the time of the convening of the First Asian-African Conference, more than half of the participating countries were anti-Communist, anti-Soviet, and anti-Chinese countries. Under such circumstances, we turned around the situation. At present, only the Soviet Union, India, and others joining together would be able to split apart the conference.

Chen: The Soviet Union insists on participating, which would split apart this conference.

Premier: I have been to some North African countries and discussed this issue. We have said that the Soviet Union is not an Asian or African country. It would be wrong at present to recognize it as an Asian or African country. Should Soviet Asian republics have observers participate, that would be the utmost consideration. We do not propose or show others how to plan. Otherwise, were the Soviet Union to participate that would change the character of the conference and make it the GANEFO. In that case, halt the preparatory work of the Second Asian-African Conference and organize another conference. At present, Algeria has already been preparing for quite a long time and, as the official host, it has to issue invitations. Algeria will never break up the conference. It would be best were Ben Bella and the UAR to advise the Soviet Union not to raise again the participation issue. If India makes trouble, then fine. Halt the Asian-African Conference's preparatory work, the discussions, and the preparations. This way, the Asian-African Conference will be cancelled. If the Soviet Union is going to participate, that will change the character of the conference. Otherwise, it will be merely the guest of President Ben Bella. In the memorandum, we will explain that our opposition to Soviet participation is not due to a dispute with China. China has the same type of dispute with Mongolia, but we do not because of it oppose Mongolia's participation. Our reasoning is sound. Leaders of some of the countries I visited were not much opposed. They know that otherwise this would change the character of the conference. Among the issues in organizing the conference, this is a relatively troublesome one but one that can be solved. It would be better not to raise this issue again, but India could do so.

This Asian-African Conference's first requirement is to seek common ground and consensus; the second is a tone higher than that of last year's conference of non-aligned countries. It requires anti-imperial, anti-colonial, support armed struggle, in particular support of the Viet Cong's five-point declaration and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam's four-point proposal, the US military's withdrawal from South Vietnam, the recognition of the Viet Cong's right of representation and the issue of

South Vietnam as one to be settled by the Vietnamese people themselves. The United States must halt the bombing of northern Vietnam. Vietnam's unification will be settled by bilateral agreement between the North and South. This requires the people of the world to support Vietnam and, in the same way, to support revolution in other areas. The present situation is completely different from that of ten years ago. At that time, all the world's countries had to give peace talks a try to see whether or not they could solve the issue. We, too, conducted 10 years of talks. The present situation is the unprecedented development of anti-US struggle around the world. The United States has not had a president like Johnson, unable to sleep over the issue of Vietnam. People say that he is both a president and a sergeant. In the United States, the people, the press, and some senators of the Democratic Party all oppose Johnson's policy. Black Americans have armed themselves in self-defense. The United States is failing at every turn but is not resigned to failure, still intent on "escalation" and flexible response. This is in fact taking a step and looking about, a policy of opportunism, one that ultimately will result in total loss. In the present international struggle, the central issue is supporting Vietnam; it is certainly not arms reduction. Where is the arms reduction? Clearly this is arms expansion.

In short, a delay of the Second Asian-African Conference is, I am afraid, not possible. Ben Bella is afraid of our stirring up trouble so that the conference does not take place.

Chairman Ho: This conference could go well. It could also go badly.

Premier: The tone of last year's non-aligned conference was relatively high. At this conference, Ben Bella does not want to tone it down. Both convening a conference with poor results and delaying the conference would be unfavorable; we must push forward. Nor does India wish to be responsible for wrecking the conference. When we proposed not inviting South Vietnam, South Korea or Tshombe, our proposal passed at once; India did not dare oppose it. As we see from this, on the surface they appear very ferocious, but so long as we resolutely fight, the issue can be solved. After reaching Algiers, I am prepared to discuss matters for 10 days, even 100 days, not letting go of him, even if it takes a year.

Chairman Ho: There are sources who say that 38 countries already support the Soviet Union attending the conference and that there are many Islamic countries that support the participation of "Malaysia."

Premier: This is India putting out feelers. In fact, there are a few at both ends and many in the middle, with neither those in favor nor those opposed in the majority. Overall, it is 16 to 12. They count on the approval of Tanzania, but Nyerere told me in person that he thinks, "The Soviet Union cannot participate. If the Soviet Union can participate, well then, the United States has Honolulu in Asia and has black people, so the United States can also participate." For our part, we are not afraid of sitting in the same conference with the Soviet Union. If the Soviet Union must come, well then, we can hold a conference of another character. It could be the GANEFO; it could also be a second United Nations.

As for the "Malaysia" issue, I once said to the UAR's Vice Premier Rifaat that our position is one of supporting you against Israel. If you do not oppose the participation of "Malaysia," that would be unjust. In short, the "Malaysia" issue requires that we together discuss it and reach a package solution. Each going individually to discuss would end in his being duped.

Chairman Ho: If, in discussing the issues of the Soviet Union and "Malaysia" at the foreign ministers conference, some countries were opposed and some countries were in favor, what then?

Premier: First, we should abide by the rules of procedure stipulated at the Jakarta preparatory conference, that is, seek common ground, reach consensus, and set aside contradictions. India already proposed a majority vote or the chairman's decision. This way, nobody knows what he would decide. We all cannot agree to this. In short, the "Malaysia" issue should have a package solution. The issue of the Soviet Union was already settled at the Jakarta conference; putting it forward again is illegal.

Chairman Ho: What if India were to put forward this issue again?

Premier: If India violates the rules of procedure, Ben Bella will invite several countries for discussion. If there are people who say they wish the Soviet Union's Asian republics participate, we will say that at most they could only participate as observers.

Chen: The "Malaysia" issue is easily rejected. If someone again puts forward the Soviet issue, it is possible that some countries would oppose it and some countries insist on participation, with the majority not declaring a position. By convention, there would be organized a group comprising foreign ministers of neutral countries to put forward suggestions, then examine the situation and make a decision. Neither China nor India would participate in the group. They could consult and put forward several types of results: the Soviet Union does not participate; due to numerous arguments, the group does not put forward the issue; or it could hand it over to the summit for discussion. Due to an inability to solve the issue, the group would enlarge, with China and India participating. In the end, after a certain period of fighting, India in fact would be unable to sacrifice itself for the Soviet Union and see it through to the end. Offending Asian countries for the sake of a European country would be a foolish thing to do. Previously, at Jakarta, we assessed that India would withdraw from the conference, but the result was no withdrawal. India's representative indicated that as the majority did not approve, he would brief Parliament. In fact he would brief the Soviet Union in order to obtain assistance. The UAR is also aware that the Soviet Union has changed its position three times. The Soviet Union itself is prepared for participating or not in the conference.

Chairman Ho: This will make the Soviet Union feel uncomfortable.

Premier: It should never have proposed participating.

Chairman Ho: Some neutral countries are indecisive. If they support the Soviet Union, they fear offending China; if they support China, they fear offending the Soviet Union.

Premier: There could be this mentality. In fact, it would be best to settle the issue. It was already solved in the preparatory conference, so it would work if it were not entered again on the agenda.

Chen: Comrade President Ho Chi Minh, if participation were not happen, this would be a good lesson for the Soviet Union. In the Jakarta preparatory committee, when they were going to vote on the issue of the Soviet Union's participation, the Soviet side organized a ceremony of giving 10 ships to Indonesia in the thought that this would plug Indonesia's mouth. Subandrio did not participate in this conference's preparatory committee, leaving after attending the ceremony and entrusting the Afghan representative to act as host. As a result, the issue of Soviet participation remains denied.

Vice President Dong: Even if India withdrew, the conference could still take place.

Chairman Ho: Sukarno once said that if "Malaysia" participated Indonesia would not

participate. Were this situation to happen, what would China do?

Premier: We told him not to take such an attitude -- which would separate him from the masses -- and that it would be all right as a demonstration outside the conference. Later, when asked, he said that Indonesia would not withdraw. At the conference, following the chairman's opening address, Sukarno will be the first to speak. This time, Sukarno decided to go to Algiers via the Soviet Union. He could go advise the Soviet Union, thinking to have the Soviet Union take charge of the next GANEFO as sponsoring country in return for not participating in the Asian-African Conference□

Chen: Having researched the issue repeatedly, we think that the conference will not be broken up. The US imperialists are now carrying out invasions in Vietnam and the Dominican Republic. This, too, will bring the conference to success. We hope that President Ho does not attach importance to the issue of Soviet participation in the conference. As we understand it, at the time of the preparatory conference in Jakarta, even Japan's delegation received internal instructions saying that, in any event, Japan should not contradict other Asian countries. Recently in Japan there were also internal instructions that Japan should not oppose other Asian and African countries.

Premier: We hope that at this Asian-African Conference, Premier Pham Van Dong prepares to give a vivid and dramatic speech, expressing vigorous support for the Viet Cong and emphasizing the victory for Vietnam's fight against the United States. This will greatly increase the confidence of other Asian and African countries against the United States. Africa's francophone countries, even if they do not participate, have no influence. Asia and Africa also have 20 revolutionary organizations to participate; in all, there are approximately 100 units participating in the conference. The fighting spirit will be very high. We also hope that Comrade Nguyen Van Hieu, too, at the conference will make a great speech and outside the conference develop activities, mobilizing Asian and African countries to oppose US imperialist invasion.

Chairman Ho: At present Comrade Pham Van Dong is making preparations and hopes that Comrade Zhou Enlai can offer many suggestions. Vietnam's delegation is also preparing to bring some materials in English and French.

Premier: As soon as we have information, we will provide it to you. It would be best if you brought some films.

Chairman Ho: Having heard the talk of Comrade Zhou Enlai and Comrade Chen Yi, I am now better able to grasp the issues concerning the Second Asian-African Conference.

Chen: At present all the world is depending on you to defeat US imperialism.

Chairman Ho: At present the US imperialists are in a completely difficult situation, sinking ever deeper. They can neither swallow it nor spit it out.

Premier: The United States continues to send large numbers of reinforcements and still is in a difficult situation. This is going to become an issue for the Congress and the Constitution, one dragging in the issue of a declaration of war.

Chairman Ho: The US soldiers are more afraid to die than the French soldiers were.

Premier: Their combat completely has no purpose. It is merely for monopoly capitalists to make a fortune.

ILD note: This document was sent from our embassy in Vietnam. Our department received it on 18 July.

[...]