



July 19, 1954
Telegram, Zhou Enlai to Mao Zedong and Others,
Regarding the Situation at the Twenty-third Restricted
Session

Citation:

“Telegram, Zhou Enlai to Mao Zedong and Others, Regarding the Situation at the Twenty-third Restricted Session,” July 19, 1954, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA. Obtained by CWIHP and translated for CWIHP by Gao Bei.
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111066>

Summary:

Zhou reports on the 23rd restricted session on Indochina. The delegates of the conference hope to make an agreement on the 20th. Zhou notes that both the Chinese/Russian side and the other side have begun to make compromises, however Bao Dai's Vietnamese delegation refused to the division of Vietnam.

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

- English Translation

Chairman Mao, Comrade [Liu] Shaoqi and the Central Committee:

(1) Eden sent [Harold] Caccia to come and meet with Ambassador [to the Soviet Union] Zheng [Wentian] on the morning of the 18th. Caccia first said that he wanted to clarify one thing: if the Geneva Conference can reach an armistice agreement acceptable to all the participants, the establishment of foreign military bases in the three countries of Indochina [Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam] and the participation of the three countries in a Southeast Asia defense pact will never happen. These two issues and the issue of the prohibition of the introduction of new weapons across the border will be confirmed in either the armistice agreement or the statement by Laos and Cambodia. Caccia also said that he hoped that the atmosphere of the meeting in the afternoon would not be too tense, and [we] should not attack a certain delegate [meaning US Under Secretary of State General Walter Bedell Smith] to create tension since it is harmful to the progress of the meeting. Caccia also guaranteed that the British delegation will not create tension.

(2) At the same time, Eden also met with Comrade Molotov and gave the same opinions. Comrade Molotov therefore went to consult [Pierre] Mendes-France before the meeting in the afternoon, and told him that we are willing to support his [plan to] establish a ceasefire on the 20th. The tone of the statement of our side at the meeting will be mild, too. Since our counterparts have changed and relatively softened their attitude under our pressure, we accordingly changed the tone of the text of our statement to make it milder.

(3) Comrade Molotov chaired the meeting in the afternoon. His tone was mild when he made the opening speech. He summarized the results that had been achieved [through previous meetings] and expressed his belief [that such success will continue]. He hoped that the parties concerned will display sincerity to agree on unresolved points in the agreement. At last, Molotov said that he "believes that today's session will help to move forward the solution of problems." Bao Dai's Foreign Minister Tran Van Do first spoke to oppose the division [of Vietnam]. He protested it and refused [to accept] the draft declarations of both the Soviet Union and France since they all referred to the division of Vietnam into two zones. Smith spoke after that and made clear the position of the US in these critical days [of the conference]. Smith said: "The attitude of the United States toward the Geneva Conference has consistently been that it is willing to assist in arriving at an honorable settlement. Such a settlement will contribute to the maintenance of peace in the area. The United States is not a belligerent in this conflict and is also not willing to impose its will upon others. However, we have been very interested in this conference. If the agreement concluded here can be accepted by the American government, the American government will declare unilaterally that, in accordance with its obligations under the United Nations Charter Article II and IV, it will refrain from the threat or the use of violence to disturb this agreement."

(4) An intermission followed after Smith's speech. All the delegations became lively in the bar and energetically carried out diplomatic activities. Smith came to talk to me, and said to me: "I hope that our two countries can move toward a better mutual understanding." Smith said: [US State Department Far Eastern Affairs Assistant Secretary Walter S.] Robertson is sick and is staying in the United States. He asked Smith to send his regards to me. Robertson also hopes that this conference can reach a positive solution, and the relations between our two countries will be gradually improved. Eden asked me if my speech was long, and I said no. Eden said that currently there are not many unsolved problems left except the issues of division, election dates and Laos. I said that there is also the issue of the composition of the NNSC. I asked him if he had already known about the French proposal. He said that he agreed to have India as chair plus Poland and Canada [as members of the NNSC]. I agreed with that, too. Eden told Mendes-France that I agreed. Mendes-France said that was good, but he still wanted to keep it secret because he needed to deal with others. The issue of composition was thus resolved. Mendes-France told me that what he worried about was the issue of Laos. I told him that I had already given my detailed opinion to the foreign minister of Laos. He said that was good. Moreover, Bao Dai's foreign minister, Tran Van Do, talked with me through the introduction of the French delegation. The foreign minister of Cambodia asked my opinions on Cambodia's draft unilateral declaration that he presented.

(5) The atmosphere of the meeting and the intermission was very relaxed, and everyone was polite. Eden then made the suggestion to Molotov that Britain and France all believe that the meeting does not need to be continued. Comrade Molotov agreed that the meeting should be adjourned after he discussed it with us. The two chairmen also decided to announce the same communique as usual, and then the meeting was adjourned. Neither Comrade Pham Van Dong nor I used the texts of the statements we prepared. The meeting began tensely but ended in a relaxed mood. We do not necessarily need to put any pressure on the conference since the United States made their position clear, Britain and France began showing a true spirit of conciliation, and the issue of composition has been solved. We will try to fend off [our counterparts on] other issues in these two days. If our counterparts are willing to keep making compromises, we believe that we can reach the agreement on the 20th.

Zhou Enlai
19 July 1954