

**March 2, 1954**

**'Preliminary Opinions on the Assessment of and Preparation for the Geneva Conference,' Prepared by the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs (drafted by PRC Premier and Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai) [Excerpt]**

**Citation:**

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<https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/111963>

**Summary:**

Zhou discusses the need to make agreements at the Geneva conference in order to open a path for discussion and negotiation with the west. Zhou notes that because the US, France and Britain are not united in their opinions, the CCP must hold fast to their positions on the peaceful unification of Korea, and of peace in Indochina. Finally, Zhou suggests that the CCP prepare to discuss issues of trade, relaxing international tensions, and breaking the US embargo, although these issues are not on the agenda.

**Original Language:**

Chinese

**Contents:**

Translation - English

Reaching agreement to convene the Geneva Conference was a great achievement by the delegation of the Soviet Union at the meeting of the foreign ministers of the Four Powers in Berlin. The People's Republic of China's participation in the [Geneva] conference alone has already marked a big step toward relaxing international tensions, and therefore has won widespread support by peace-loving peoples and countries all over the world. However, the bloc of imperialist aggressors, and the US government in particular, has been intentionally underestimating the significance of the Geneva Conference, predicting that it, as happened at Berlin on Germany and Austria, will not achieve any result. But the opinions of the United States, Britain, and France on the Korea issue and especially on the Indochina issue and many other issues of international affairs are far from identical. Sometimes, the contradictions among them are very large, and they are facing many internal difficulties too.

In accordance with the above understanding, we should adopt a policy of actively participating in the Geneva Conference, of enhancing diplomatic and international activities, in order to undermine the policy of blockade, embargo, and expanding armaments and war preparations by the US imperialists, and of promoting the relaxation of the tense international situation. Even though the United States will try everything possible to sabotage reaching all kinds of agreements favorable to the cause of peace, we should still go all out at the Geneva Conference to strive for some agreements, even agreements only temporary [in nature] and limited [in scope], so as to open the path to resolving international disputes through discussions and negotiations by the big powers.

(2) Regarding a peaceful settlement of the Korea question, our side should tightly adhere to the slogan of peaceful unification, national independence, and free elections, and oppose [Republic of Korea President] Syngman Rhee's [policy of] armed unification, the US-South Korea treaty of defense, and the so-called free elections held when the people have no freedom at all...

(3) Regarding Indochina... we must try our best to make sure that the Geneva Conference will not end without any result; even [if] no agreement can be reached, we still should not allow the negotiations for restoring peace in Indochina to be undermined completely, and should create a situation characterized by "negotiating while fighting," thus increasing the difficulties inside France and the contradictions between France and America, so that it will be beneficial for the people in Indochina to carry out struggles for liberation. ... On the specific questions related to restoring peace in Indochina, an on-site ceasefire is not as good as a division along a demarcation line between the south and north, such as the 16th parallel. However, only through many struggles can such a favorable situation be achieved.

(4) The agenda of the Geneva Conference is set for discussing the Korea and Indochina questions, but it does not exclude discussion of other specific questions possibly to be raised [at the conference]. At the conference, if there is the opportunity, we may put forward other urgent international issues that are favorable to relaxing the tense international situation. ... Therefore, apart from the Korea and Vietnam questions, we must prepare other materials and opinions concerning China, the Far East, and peace and security in Asia. In particular, [we must prepare for] effusive measures toward the development of economic relations, trade exchanges between various countries, and for further relaxing the tense international situation and breaking up the blockade and embargo by the US imperialists. Outside the conference, the mutual relations between China and Britain, China and France, and China and Canada will be touched upon, and we should make some preparations in this respect.