

**May 28, 1965**  
**Discussion between Zhou Enlai and Indonesian  
Prime Minister Subandrio**

**Citation:**

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**Summary:**

Zhou Enlai outlines the Chinese reaction should the US expand the Vietnam War into China, reassuring Subandrio that should the war enter China, his country is prepared to retaliate.

**Original Language:**

Chinese

**Contents:**

Translation - English

ZHOU ENLAI AND INDONESIAIAN FIRST VICE PRIME MINISTER SUBANDRIO<sup>[1]</sup>

Guangzhou, 28 May 1965

Zhou Enlai: [On the Vietnam question] The United States, prior to being prepared for fighting a war, began to dash around madly in Vietnam. All of its predictions are wrong. It put forward the strategy of "gradual escalation," meaning that it will take a step, and watch before taking the next step. This is the worst taboo in a military sense. Taylor and Johnson are extreme pragmatists. They do not have a long-term strategy. Our friends in South Vietnam told us that they were able to fight 200,000 American troops and 500,000-600,000 puppet troops. The population of South Vietnam is 14 million, and they dare to fight 200,000 American troops. If [the Americans] expand the war to China, with our population, which is 50 times that of South Vietnam, we can fight at least 10 million American troops.

Subandrio: If the United States bombards you from the air, what would you do?

Zhou Enlai: I have told many foreign friends about the four-sentence statement I made in Maowu [Bogor, Indonesia].<sup>[2]</sup> (1) China will not take the initiative to provoke a war against the United States. We have conducted negotiations with the United States for over ten years on the Taiwan issue, which can be taken as evidence. (2) China will honor what it has said. The Korean War can be taken as evidence. (3) China is prepared. At present, our whole country is being mobilized. (4) If the United States bombs China, that means bringing the war to China. The war has no boundary. This has two meanings: First, you cannot say that only an air war on your part is allowed, and the land war on my part is not allowed. Second, not only may you invade our territory, we may also fight a war abroad.

<sup>[1]</sup> Subandrio (1914- ) a medical doctor by training, was Indonesian foreign minister 1957-66 and second deputy first minister 1960-66. He had visited Beijing in early January 1963. In October 1966 he was convicted of complicity in an attempted Communist coup and sentenced to death. The sentence was commuted into life imprisonment in 1970, and on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Indonesian declaration of independence in 1995, Subandrio was released from jail.

<sup>[2]</sup> Zhou Enlai visited Indonesia in April 1965, and met with Subandrio in Bogor on April 20. He made the four-point statement during that meeting. The gathering at Bogor was held in conjunction with ceremonies marking the tenth anniversary of the Bandung Conference which established the non-aligned movement. The prominent role played by Asian communist leaders at the April 1965 conference, and the fact that Sukarno addressed a mass meeting dominated by Indonesian communists, were important factors in triggering the process leading to the September crisis when General Suharto seized power, and to the destruction of the Indonesian Left in a massacre.