

November 3, 1964

**Record of Zhou Enlai's Discussion with British
Minister President of the Board of Trade Douglas Jay**

Citation:

"Record of Zhou Enlai's Discussion with British Minister President of the Board of Trade Douglas Jay", November 3, 1964, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Dang de wenxian (Party Historical Documents), no. 3 (1994): 16-17. Translated by Neil Silver.
<https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/114358>

Summary:

Having successfully executed a nuclear test explosion, Zhou Enlai describes the Chinese government's motivation for pursuing atomic weapons capabilities. Zhou argues that the Three-Nation Treaty (Limited Test Ban Treaty) is insufficient, that the United States remains committed to nuclear proliferation despite the agreement, and that China seeks to end the monopoly that other nuclear powers have thus far exploited. Zhou also calls for the organization of a global, truly equal summit at which to discuss the issue of nuclear weapons testing and proliferation.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY)

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Transcript - Chinese
Translation - English

You have conveyed His Excellency the Prime Minister's wish to hear the views of the Chinese government. I want to candidly tell Your Excellency so your new government may understand the views and attitudes of the Chinese government with regard to the prohibition of nuclear weapons and the issue of disarmament. Of course, should Your Excellency wish to raise some ideas for discussion, I am also willing to do that. First, on the issue of the prohibition of nuclear weapons, the Chinese government's view has already been stated completely and clearly in the Chinese government's October 16 statement and in the letter addressed the next day to the heads of government of all the nations of the world. Our objective in carrying out nuclear testing is to bring about the total prohibition and complete elimination of nuclear weapons and to break the nuclear monopoly of the big nuclear powers. Our proposal in calling for a summit meeting of heads of world governments is designed to satisfy the desire of the peoples of the world for the prohibition of nuclear weapons and the achievement of world peace. With respect to [the fact that] the government statement regarding our atomic bomb explosion and the Chinese government's letter addressed to the heads of world governments were [issued] on virtually the same day as our first successful nuclear test, this shows that our purpose is to break the nuclear monopoly and eliminate nuclear weapons, and, for this very reason, we have stated that China at no time and under no circumstance will be the first to use nuclear weapons.

Why not only this time, but also last year, did we propose to convene a summit meeting of world heads of government to discuss the total prohibition and complete elimination of nuclear weapons? First, we believe that since world opinion holds the destructive power of nuclear weapons to be quite large and threatening to the safety of the world's people, we should allow all countries to participate and should not distinguish between large and small countries. Small and large countries both have the right to express their views. Second, to break the nuclear monopoly, we should allow countries that do not have nuclear weapons an opportunity to express their views. Third, only by restraining nuclear weapons countries, and guaranteeing the non-use of nuclear weapons, can we achieve our goal of the total prohibition and complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Only by having non-nuclear countries join in a summit meeting of the world heads of government can we spur countries possessing large quantities of nuclear weapons to accept their responsibility and guarantee not to use nuclear weapons.

Of course, some will say why can't the world heads of government discuss this in the United Nations, rather than by convening a separate meeting? As Your Excellency understands, not only has the People's Republic of China been deprived of its legal rights in the United Nations, but even if the legal rights of the People's Republic of China were restored in the United Nations, there are still some other countries that for the time being cannot be admitted by the United Nations. The prohibition of nuclear weapons is an issue affecting the interests of all the peoples of the world; we should give all countries in the world the right to participate in a meeting and discuss this issue; and we should convene a meeting outside the United Nations. Your Excellency says it would be very difficult to convene a meeting with so many countries participating, and perhaps [it would be better to] first convene a limited meeting, a meeting with a small number of countries participating, and hold consultations in a meeting like the Geneva Conference? Your Excellency is much more knowledgeable than I am about the experience of the Geneva Disarmament Conference. A small number of countries have convened for many years, each time without result. The Disarmament Conference has passed the ball to the United Nations General Assembly and the General Assembly has handed it back to the Disarmament Conference, with the agenda going back and forth. This shows that issues affecting the interests of all the world's peoples should be discussed with all the world's countries participating in and spurring the determination of policy, first of all the non-use of nuclear weapons. Another kind of Geneva Conference, such as those that discussed the Indochina or the Laotian issues, only discussed partial and local issues and only with the participation of concerned countries. It is easy to reach agreement in these kinds of meetings with the great effort of participating countries.

These kinds of meetings are also convened outside the United Nations.

Another of Your Excellency's arguments is that without the end to war, whether world war, local wars, or wars such as the United States calls a special kind of war, it is very difficult to prohibit the use of nuclear weapons. If this is the view of Your Excellency's government, I believe this kind of thinking is very dangerous, since this is the same as the thinking of the United States. After both the signing in draft and the official signing of the Three-Nation Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in Moscow, American leaders and officials repeatedly stated that the signing of the Three-Nation Treaty would not diminish the threat of nuclear war, and would not prohibit the production, storage, proliferation and underground testing of nuclear weapons. In this way, of what use is the Three-Nation Treaty? U.S. Secretary of State [Dean] Rusk announced publicly after going to Moscow to sign that the multilateral nuclear force would continue to be implemented. We believe that the foundation of the Three-Nation Treaty is faulty. The issue involves all the peoples of the world and can only be decided after allowing all the peoples of the world to participate in the discussion. The signing of the Three-Nation Treaty puts a fait accompli before everyone, forcing them to sign. In international politics, this is unequal. It is power politics, not international equality.

Not only will the Three-Nation Treaty not achieve its publicized effect, but it will be just the opposite of what is wished. As I just said, this is proved by the lengthy and tedious statements made by U.S. officials after signing the Three-Nation Treaty. Regarding the issue of environmental pollution, the United States has carried out almost four hundred atmospheric nuclear tests. It should bear great responsibility for polluting the world's atmosphere. Only when the time came that the United States did not need atmospheric nuclear testing, did it then work out an agreement. Only after it had enough atmospheric nuclear testing, did it then turn to underground testing. It goes without saying that the draft of the Three-Nation Treaty basically was proposed several years ago by the United States, and then passed almost without any changes. China now has tested once and people are screaming. What a joke! If China had not tested, no one would be talking about the prohibition of nuclear testing, but as soon as we tested, people want China to participate in disarmament conferences saying that China has joined the nuclear club. Of course, the United States says that China is not qualified to participate. The United States needs underground nuclear tests and it carries out underground nuclear testing to the maximum extent possible, especially to improve strategic nuclear weapons. Its goal is very clear. The Three-Nation Treaty is aimed at binding the hands and feet of the socialist countries, and binding the hands and feet of the independent countries, while allowing the United States to test and proliferate. The multilateral nuclear force is precisely nuclear proliferation. Underground testing is the kind of testing it requires. If it should ever need atmospheric testing, it will be able to resume [atmospheric testing].