

August 19, 1965

Chinese Foreign Ministry Circular, "Vietnam 'Peace Talk' Activities"

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Summary:

The Chinese Foreign Ministry reports on overtures made by the United States toward initiating peace talks to end the Vietnam War. Many countries in such as Ghana, France, India and Yugoslavia are attempting to promote the talks, but China remains skeptical of these initiatives and opposed to opening talks.

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On the question of Vietnam, in order to extract itself politically from the predicament and to win breathing time militarily, the United States has made a number of "peace" gestures recently, actively promoting peace talk activities from all sides. This time, the peace talk activities are covering broader aspects and the conditions proposed for peace talks are more deceptive. The situation is very complex and we must pay attention to it.

Johnson sent [Averell] Harriman to the Soviet Union to conduct strategic reconnaissance and to find out the Soviet position. Johnson might even receive intelligence about the DRV intentions from the Soviet Union. On July 28, drawing on Harriman's report of his talks with Soviet leaders and the results of [Robert] McNamara's on-the-spot survey of South Vietnam, Johnson, while announcing that the United States would send more troops to South Vietnam, increase military spending on Vietnam, and continue to bomb North Vietnam, said that the United States was ready to "discuss Hanoi's proposals" and that the issue of the NLF's participation in negotiations "is not an unresolvable difficulty." Johnson also officially requested the intervention of the United Nations in the Vietnam question.[2]

Because of the American gesture and encouragement, activities to promote peace talks from all sides have immediately become active. Despite being turned down by the DRV, Nkrumah has continued to pester, requesting a visit to the DRV and China. This is the continuation of the peace talk activities by the British Commonwealth "peace mission." Directed by Harriman, India and Yugoslavia have conducted discussions and are at present actively establishing contact with other non-aligned countries, particularly the United Arab Republic, Guinea, Uganda and other African countries. Zambia has asked Ethiopia to join in its appeal to China, the United States, and the Soviet Union for a peaceful settlement of the Vietnam question. Zambia has also indicated that it wants to take the issue to the African Summit Meeting. De Gaulle has sent Malraux to visit China to examine our position. Although the Soviet revisionists dare not openly participate in peace talk activities, the Soviet government has privately colluded with the United States. The Soviet media is openly echoing the American peace talk plots. The activities of India and Yugoslavia have obviously received the promotion and blessing of the Soviet revisionists.

In comparison with the "Seventeen-Country Appeal," the first round of peace talk activities after the announcement of the American "unconditional discussions" proposal, and the second round of peace talk activities in the wake of the formation of the British Commonwealth "peace mission," this round of peace talk activities has the following unusual characteristics:

(1) Conditions for Peace Talks Are More Deceptive.

After the United States has made the gesture of "lowering" its conditions for peace talks, countries interested in promoting peace talks have advanced many plans, such as the call for a suspension of the bombardment of North Vietnam and a ceasefire, the inclusion of the NLF in negotiations, the settlement of the Vietnam issue on the basis of the 1954 Geneva Accords. These proposals can be traced to the same origins of the American gesture. On the surface, they appear to offer more compromises to the DRV and ask the United States to make concessions first.

(2) The Modes of Peace Talk Activities Are More Diversified with the Purpose of Creating an Atmosphere and Pressing the DRV into Peace Talks.

The number of countries involved in this round of peace talk activities has

increased from the previous two rounds. The motivations for these countries vary. Some countries work for the United States in order to receive American aid. Some are afraid of war. Some combine both of these considerations. Others want to cut a deal with the United States over Vietnam and still others desire to weaken American influence in Southeast Asia. The mode of peace talk activities this time also vary. Some countries operate on their own while others work collectively. Some act openly while others function secretly. It is to be expected that in the various international meetings forthcoming in the next few months, such as the United Nations, the African Summit Meeting, the Afro-Asian Conference, the Vietnam question will be discussed officially or unofficially.

It is especially notable that the United States this time is striving, through India and Yugoslavia, to encourage some African countries to make initiatives. By doing so, the United States is exploiting the ignorance and the fear of war expansion on the part of the African countries. A more important consideration behind the U.S. effort is the American desire to take advantage of the recent anti-China movement by right-wing states in Africa to drive a wedge between China and African countries.

(3) (The United States) Is Even More Flagrantly Sowing Discord Between China and the DRV.

The United States is on the one hand forcing the DRV into peace talks through blackmail and deception and on the other flagrantly sowing dissension between China and the DRV. It claims that the DRV's position on peace negotiations has moderated and that China represents the only obstacle. On this score, the Soviet revisionists, India, Yugoslavia, and other reactionaries are collaborating closely with the United States.

A fundamental fact is that the DRV's struggle against the United States is resolute and that it will not stop its fight to liberate the South. But on the treatment of Soviet revisionism, the DRV's position differs from ours. On the issue of peace talks, the DRV's practice also diverges from ours. The DRV has never completely closed the door on peace talks, thus creating an opportunity for imperialism, revisionism, and reactionaries and increasing their illusions to pressure the DRV to open peace negotiations.

Judging by the developments mentioned above, the peace talk activities this time are complicated and the struggle to oppose peace talk hoaxes will be more arduous. Although the United States has made some gestures, none of them includes any substantive concession. This reality will become clear to all countries in the world after the peace talk activities have progressed for a period of time.

In contact with foreigners, if circumstances are necessary, you can cite our government's statement of August 7 and the points made in the recent editorials and commentaries in the People's Daily to lay bare the American policy of real expansion of war and sham gestures of peace talks, expose the Soviet revisionist collaboration with the United States, and express our determination to support the Vietnamese struggle through to the end. But you do not need to initiate conversations on Vietnam peace talks unnecessarily. In this regard, bear in mind that we are cooperating with the Vietnamese comrades. Do not appear over enthusiastic and do not take the Vietnamese job into our hands. Do not highlight our role. Especially in talking with the Vietnamese comrades, be careful not to give the impression that we are imposing our views on them.

August 19, 1965.

[1] The CC CCP on August 24, 1965 sent this circular to its regional bureaus,

provincial committees as well as the ministries of the State Council and the General Political Department of the PLA.

[2] President Johnson made this speech at a news conference at the White House on July 28, 1965. For the text of Johnson's speech, see The Department of State Bulletin, Vol. 53, No. 1364 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, August 16, 1965), pp. 262-265. There is, however, no such sentence as the issue of the NLF's participation in negotiations "is not an unresolvable difficulty" in the original statement. After returning home and reporting to Johnson, Harriman further announced that the DRV's Four Points Formula "can become the basis of United States-North Vietnam negotiations."