

April 19, 1955

Supplementary Speech of Premier Zhou Enlai at the Plenary Session of the Asian African-Conference

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Summary:

Zhou Enlai claimed that although the PRC believed communism was positive, they did not come to the conference for the purpose of propaganda and wished to seek communality instead, otherwise they could have mentioned the Taiwan issue and the treatment of the PRC at the UN. He went on to stress that ideological and religious difference should not prevent countries from agreeing on fundamental points. Zhou also discussed China's opposition to interference in other countries' affairs.

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SUPPLEMENTARY SPEECH BY PREMIER CHOU EN-LAI [Zhou Enlai] AT THE PLENARY SESSION OF THE ASIAN-AFRICAN CONFERENCE

Mr. Chairman, Fellow Delegates:

My main speech has been mimeographed and is being distributed to you. After listening to the speeches delivered by the heads of many delegations. I would like to make some supplementary remarks.

The Chinese Delegation has come here to seek unity and not to quarrel. We Communists do not hide the fact that we believe in communism and that we consider socialist system a good system. There is no need at this Conference to publicize one's ideology and the political system of one's country, although differences do exist among us.

The Chinese Delegation has come here to seek common ground, not to create divergence. Is there any basis for seeking common ground among us? Yes, there is. The overwhelming majority of the Asian and African countries and peoples have suffered and are still suffering from the calamities of colonialism. This is acknowledged by all of us. If we seek common ground in doing away with the sufferings and calamities under colonialism, it will be very easy for us to have mutual understanding and respect, mutual sympathy and support, instead of mutual suspicion and fear, mutual exclusion and antagonism. That is why we agree to the four purposes of the Asian-African Conference declared by the prime ministers of the five countries at the Bogor Conference and do not make any other proposal.

As for the tension created solely by the United States in the area of Taiwan, we could have submitted for deliberation by the Conference an item such as the proposal made by the Soviet Union for seeking a settlement through an international conference. The will of the Chinese people to liberate their own territory Taiwan and the coastal islands is a just one. It is entirely a matter of our internal affairs and the exercise of our sovereignty. This just demand of ours has won the support of many countries. Again, we could have submitted for deliberation by the Conference the question of recognizing and restoring the legitimate status of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations. The Bogor Conference held by the prime ministers of the five Colombo powers last year supported the restoration of the legitimate status of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations. And so did other countries of Asia and Africa. Besides, we could have also made criticisms here as regards the unfair treatment of China by the United Nations. But we did not do all this, because otherwise our Conference would be dragged into disputes about all these problems without any solution.

In our Conference we should seek common ground among us, while keeping our differences. As to our common ground, the Conference should affirm all our common desires and demands. This is our main task here. As to our differences, none of us is asked to give up his own views, because difference in viewpoints is an objective reality. But we should not let our differences hinder us from achieving agreement as far as our main task is concerned. On the basis of our common points, we should try to understand and appreciate the different views that we hold.

Now first of all I would like to talk about the question of different ideologies and social systems. We have to admit that among our Asian and African countries, we do have different ideologies and different social systems. But this does not prevent us from seeking common ground and being united. Many independent countries have appeared since the Second World War. One group of them are countries led by the Communist Parties; another group of them are countries led by nationalists. There are not many countries in the first group. But what some people dislike is the fact that the 600 million Chinese people have chosen a political system which is socialist in

nature and led by the Chinese Communist Party and that the Chinese people are no longer under the rule of the imperialists. The countries in the second group are greater in number, such as India, Burma, Indonesia and many other countries in Asia and Africa. Both of these groups of countries have become independent of the colonial rule and are still continuing their struggle for complete independence. Is there any reason why we cannot understand and respect each other and give support and sympathy to each other? There is every reason to make the five principles the basis for establishing friendly co-operation and good neighbourly relations among us. We Asian and African countries, China included, are all backward economically and culturally. Inasmuch as our Asian-African Conference does not exclude anybody, why couldn't we ourselves understand each other and enter into friendly co-operation?

Secondly, I would like to talk about the question as to whether there is freedom of religious belief. Freedom of religious belief is a principle recognized by all modern nations. We Communists are atheists, but we respect all those who have religious belief. We hope that those with religious belief will also respect those without. China is a country where there is freedom of religious belief. There are, in China, not only seven million Communists, but also tens of millions of Moslems and Buddhists and millions of Protestants and Catholics. Here in the Chinese Delegation, there is a pious Imam of the Islamic faith. Such a situation is no obstacle to the internal unity of China. Why should it be impossible in the community of Asian and African countries to unite those with religious belief and those without? The days of instigating religious strife should have passed, because those who profit from instigating such strife are not those among us.

Thirdly, I would like to talk about the question of so-called subversive activities. The struggle of the Chinese people against colonialism lasted for more than a hundred years. The national and democratic revolutionary struggles led by the Chinese Communist Party finally achieved success only after a strenuous and difficult course of 30 years. It is impossible to relate all the sufferings of the Chinese people under the rule of imperialism, feudalism and Chiang Kai-shek [Jiang Jieshi]. At last, the Chinese people have chosen their state system and present government. It is by the efforts of the Chinese people that the Chinese revolution has won its victory. It is certainly not imported from without. This point cannot be denied even by those who do not like the victory of the Chinese revolution. As a Chinese proverb says: "Do not do unto others what you yourself do not desire." We are against outside interference; how could we want to interfere in the internal affairs of others? Some people say: There are more than 10 million overseas Chinese whose dual nationality might be taken advantage of to carry out subversive activities. But the problem of dual nationality is something left behind by old China. Up to date, Chiang Kai-shek [Jiang Jieshi] is still using some very few overseas Chinese to carry out subversive activities against the countries where they are residing. The People's Government of New China, however, is ready to solve the problem of dual nationality of overseas Chinese with the governments of the countries concerned. Some other people say that the autonomous region of Tai people in China is a threat to others. There are in China more than 40 million national minorities of scores of nationalities. The Tai people and the Chu and people who are of the same stock as the Tai people, number almost 10 million. Since they do exist, we must grant them the right of autonomy. Just as there is an autonomous state for Shan people in Burma, every national minority in China has its autonomous region. The national minorities in China exercise their right of autonomy within China, how could that be said as being a threat to our neighbours? On the basis of the strict adherence to the five principles, we are prepared now to establish normal relations with all the Asian and African countries, with all the countries in the world, and first of all, with our neighboring countries. The problem at present is not that we are carrying out subversive activities against the governments of other countries, but that there are people who are establishing bases around China in order to carry out subversive activities against the Chinese Government. For instance, on the border between China and Burma, there are in fact remnant armed elements of the Chiang Kai-shek [Jiang Jieshi] clique who are carrying out destructive activities against both China and Burma. Because of the friendly relations between

China and Burma, and because we have always respected the sovereignty of Burma, we have confidence in the Government of Burma for the solution of this problem.

The Chinese people have chosen and support their own government. There is freedom of religious belief in China. China has no intention whatsoever to subvert the governments of its neighbouring countries. On the contrary, it is China that is suffering from the subversive activities which are openly carried out without any disguise by the United States of America. Those who do not believe in this may come to China or send someone there to see for themselves. We take cognizance of the fact that there are doubts in the mind of those who do not yet know the truth. There is a saying in China: "Better seeing once than hearing a hundred times." We welcome the delegates of all the participating countries in this Conference to visit China at any time they like. We have no bamboo curtain, but some people are spreading a smokescreen between us.

The 1,600 million people of Asia and Africa wish our Conference success. All the countries and peoples of the world who desire peace are looking forward to the contribution which the Conference will make towards the extension of the area of peace and the establishment of collective peace. Let us, the Asian and African countries, be united and do our utmost to make the Asian-African Conference a success.

(April 19, 1955)