

**February 25, 1955**  
**Abstract of Conversation: Chinese Premier Zhou  
receives Trevelyan**

**Citation:**

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**Summary:**

Zhou Enlai and Trevelyan debated on the nature of the Manila Treaty and its implications for the Geneva Agreement. They also discussed the issue of the Dai Autonomous Region between China and Thailand and the legal status of Taiwan.

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Top Secret

Abstract of Conversation: Premier Zhou receives Trevelyan

Time: 25 February 1955, 8 p.m. - 10:10 p.m.

Location: Zhongnanhai, Xihua Hall

Chinese Accompanying Personnel: Department Director Huang Hua, Pu Shouchang (translator and stenographer)

British Accompanying Personnel: [Edward] Youde

First, Premier Zhou [Enlai] handed over a memorandum for [Anthony] Eden and asked [Humphrey] Trevelyan to pass it on as quickly as possible.

After reading the memorandum's contents, Trevelyan said, [our] thanks to Premier Zhou for his memorandum; he also said he would be sure to pass it on to Eden himself. He continued: Britain has carefully researched the Chinese government's objections to the Southeast Asia Treaty [Organization]. He said, first of all, [we] want to assure Premier Zhou that if Eden thought the Southeast Asia Treaty conflicted in any way with the Geneva Conference agreements he had joined, he would not have signed this treaty. Britain feels that the Southeast Asia Treaty is aimed at aggression regardless of the source; it is only defensive and does not threaten anyone. Just as China and the Soviet Union have their own alliance and Britain and others do not interfere with it, Britain and others have their own purely defensive alliance and also feel it to be their own affair.

Trevelyan said that the [British] Commonwealth member nations mentioned in the Southeast Asia Treaty were not consulted [when it was drafted]; those nations have not joined in the treaty, nor can they make use of this treaty, let alone shoulder the treaty's obligations of establishing military bases and participating in military affairs. This treaty's protocol just says that the treaty only goes into effect with Commonwealth member nations when the Geneva Agreement is broken; thus, the treaty has strengthened the Geneva Agreement. If the Geneva Agreement were broken, then not only must the Commonwealth member nations be consulted, but in accordance with the Geneva Agreement, the Geneva Conference's other participating countries must also be consulted.

Trevelyan said he did not want to go into too much detail, only to make one point clear—that is, the Southeast Asia Treaty is defensive [and] does not threaten anyone; thus, it is helpful for easing the tense situation. He said he had confidence that Britain would not sign or adhere to a treaty if it ran counter to the obligations Britain had assumed under the Geneva Agreement. As regards the United States' recent activities, notably conducting military training in South Vietnam, he wished to use the reply that Eden, as one of the Geneva Conference's chairmen, had made to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam's charges. Eden said that this matter is first of all the responsibility of the International Control Commission and should be handled by this commission.

Trevelyan finally said that he would be certain to pass Premier Zhou's memorandum on to Eden, and that he believed this memorandum would receive the fullest and most careful consideration.

Premier Zhou said that we would like to say a few more words of explanation regarding this memorandum. What Chargé D'Affaires Trevelyan has just said cannot, of course, cause us to agree; we have disagreed in the past, and made both sides' positions very clear. The difference of opinion between us is not only due to our having two positions; more importantly, it is because the British government's explanations and views do not agree with the facts. This is where the danger lies.

Explanations that do not agree with the facts are soon overturned; dangerous things develop out of mistaken theories. This is the basic reason why we asked Foreign Minister Eden to give [the matter] serious attention. Just now Chargé D'Affaires Trevelyan compared the Southeast Asia Treaty to the friendly alliance between China and the Soviet Union; Foreign Secretary Eden also once put it this way in Geneva. At that time I responded and pointed out that this sort of comparison is incorrect. The friendly alliance between China and the Soviet Union is completely defensive in nature; what it defends against is a revival of Japanese imperialism. In the past, the Japanese imperialists invaded China, and now the United States wants to revive Japanese imperialism. Since Japanese imperialism might be revived, and there are people who want to make use of it, we must make defensive arrangements. If that sort of thing doesn't happen, we will not take any action either. Besides this, we have not made hostile arrangements concerning any party. Despite these [circumstances], due to China's increased capacity for self-defense, the Japanese people's demand for independence, and an increased desire for peace, Soviet troops will still withdraw from Port Lüshun [Port Arthur] before the end of May this year-even though the threat of a Japanese imperialist resurgence remains. Thus every step we have taken has been for the sake of easing tensions in the Far East. If one compares these circumstances with the post-Geneva Conference Manila Treaty, one can see that they are completely different. The Geneva Agreement created a collective guarantee of peace between Indochina and Southeast Asia. The Manila Treaty violated this collective guarantee and formed a hostile military alliance. It primarily targets the People's Republic of China; regardless of whether the British government admits it, this point was made in the treaty's Memorandum of Understanding. In the Bangkok Conference now in session, the foreign ministers of Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand again emphasized this point. The Manila Treaty is also a military alliance. This is exactly what the Geneva Agreement is meant to rule out. The Geneva Agreement is meant to ensure that Indochina's four parts do not join in any military alliance. But the Manila Treaty carries the intention of drawing three of Indochina's nations into this military alliance. An even more important violation of the Geneva Agreement is that the treaty itself constitutes interference in Indonesia's internal affairs, and Southeast Asian countries have not asked for this treaty. These facts are in blatant violation of the Geneva Agreement.

The Manila Treaty's later developments revealed the United States' ambitions even more clearly. The United States wants to use every means to violate the Geneva Agreement. Thus it stated openly that it wanted to turn Bao Dai's Vietnam [South Vietnam] troops into modernized troops through training, developing these forces, providing military aid, and drawing up a military training and equipment plan. If this sort of phenomenon is allowed to continue, there is bound to be covert transportation of military arms and personnel. The United States wants to establish a naval port in Cambodia, and it also wants to get involved in Laos. This all violates the Geneva Agreement. The prime minister of the Kingdom of Laos visited Thailand on the 19th of this month and said publicly that the Manila Treaty does not violate the Geneva Agreement. The United States is seeking to pull Laos into the Manila Treaty through Thailand. This plot is still developing.

We recently received an as-yet-unconfirmed report that leftover Guomindang [Nationalist Party] armed forces in Thailand and Burma have already penetrated Laos and are engaged in the [same] things they did in Burma. If this news is true, it is a serious matter: this means foreign armed forces have invaded Laos, which in itself is a violation of the Geneva Agreement - and these armed forces were not only expelled by the Chinese people, but also threaten China's security. If this news is true, there is absolutely no doubt that the United States and Thailand are behind it. The government of the People's Republic of China cannot brush this matter aside, and [we] also wish the British government to clarify [the facts of] this matter. Similar plots are in development. The United States' policy is to take steps to violate the Geneva Agreement, then see how the different Geneva Conference countries react. We must point out that the reason the United States dares to steadily advance is because it has Britain's support and France's agreement. The different countries

participating in the Geneva Agreement originally meant to jointly ensure peace in Indochina. But the Geneva Agreement has only existed for a little over half a year, and now it looks like it's going to be violated. If the United States' destructive activities are allowed to steadily advance, there are sure to be serious consequences.

Under these tense circumstances, we cannot but request that Foreign Secretary Eden, as one of the chairmen of the Geneva Conference, give serious attention to this point. We should also say that the United States and its followers must bear full responsibility for serious consequences arising from this.

As far as the Chinese side is concerned, we wish to inform Foreign Secretary Eden that we firmly abide by the Geneva Agreement; the International Supervisory Committee's report can prove this point. We wish to strive to promote the restoration and consolidation of peace in Indochina. Speaking on this point, the Manila Treaty's hostile attitude toward China is in violation of the Geneva Agreement, and detrimental to peace in Asia. In the Bangkok Conference now in session, [the attendees] want to strengthen these detrimental activities; this is entirely meant to serve the United States in expanding its invasion of Southeast Asian regions. Consequently, all sorts of excuses must be created. Thailand says that the Dai Autonomous Region on the border of China's Yunnan province is the center of the so-called Free Thai Movement. China has many ethnic minorities, and they have many similarities with the ethnic minorities on the borders of various surrounding countries. For example, China has the Dai minority and a Dai Autonomous Region; Burma also has the Dai minority, called the Shan, and also has an autonomous prefecture. Within China, the Mongol ethnicity has an autonomous region, the Korean ethnicity has an autonomous region in the northeast, and there is also an Uzbek minority autonomous region in Xinjiang. Thailand also says that there is a person called Pai Nongrong [sic--Phonetic Chinese] in China. But he is a political exile, and has nothing to do with the Dai Autonomous Region. Thailand wants to fabricate excuses to serve the United States; this is complete hearsay, complete nonsense. Now the leftover Nationalist troops are penetrating Laos, and much more hearsay will be fabricated. We must state that China firmly abides by the Geneva Agreement; if certain other Geneva Conference participant countries want to violate the Geneva Agreement on Indochinese territory and provoke conflict, then the responsibility lies with them. China will not tolerate this kind of violation; [we] especially cannot tolerate provocations to China. [You] must be sure to request Foreign Secretary Eden's attention to this matter.

There is another matter [to discuss]: for the past few months, the Taiwan issue has been a source of unpleasantness in Sino-British relations. In this matter, Britain has followed the United States' policy of aggression from start to finish, [and] the Chinese government cannot but express its regret yet again. On the Taiwan issue, it is clearly the United States that is conducting an invasion. How could China's liberation of its own territory be called an invasion? But British government leaders defended Jiang Jieshi [Chiang Kai-shek] and insulted China in Parliament. This does not fit with our two nations' furthering of diplomatic relations following the Geneva Conference. Recently there has been a piece of news from the U.S. saying that Foreign Secretary Eden stated in Bangkok that if hostile activity occurred in the Taiwan region, Britain would support the United States. In other words, Britain would support the United States' invasion; if the United States took actions to [initiate] a war, Britain would side with the United States and make war on China. If this news is true, we can only [see] two explanations. The first is that Britain wants to intimidate the Chinese people. But as Mr. Trevelyan should know, the Chinese people cannot be intimidated. If not even the United States can intimidate us, can Britain? This only needlessly adds to the Chinese people's indignation, damages Sino-British relations, and increases the unpleasantness and tension between us. The second [explanation] is that the British government really means to go to war. This is not in line with British public opinion or the will of the British people. The Chinese people are not at all hostile toward the British people, nor are the British people hostile toward the Chinese people. Then why would British government do this? We wonder what the British government's actual intentions are. According to the reports, Foreign Secretary Eden's remarks

were very similar to those made last year at the United Nations by British Representative Neiding [sic--Phonetic Chinese]. The British government and Foreign Secretary Eden in particular have put themselves in a very embarrassing position; this is the inevitable result of following the United States. No matter what the United States does that is wrong, Britain condones it; this will not be well received in Asia. Mr. Trevelyan has said several times that Britain does not recognize Jiang Jieshi. I do not see this statement as reliable; I am skeptical on this issue. Please convey this point to Foreign Secretary Eden. On the Taiwan issue, the British government is unpopular in Chinese public opinion and among the Chinese people, and has been criticized.

Trevelyan said he was very glad that Premier Zhou had summoned him today, because there were many difficult, and at the same time important, issues to discuss. It is beneficial for China and Britain to state their respective positions in absolutely clear terms to each other. The two sides certainly do not always agree on the facts. But if Britain trusts that China offers a sincere explanation of the facts based on its own views, we then hope that China trusts that Britain does likewise. China may think that Britain is wrong, but Britain believes what it says.

Trevelyan said that Premier Zhou once discussed the proposed Manila Treaty with Eden in Geneva. Premier Zhou doubtless sensed that Eden truly believed the proposed Manila Treaty did not conflict with the Geneva Agreement. Trevelyan assured Premier Zhou that Britain firmly abided by the Geneva Agreement. Now both sides have brought complaints [against each other], but these complaints can be satisfactorily handled by the International Supervisory Committee. Trevelyan said that no matter what the circumstances, he believed the Geneva Agreement would be fully implemented. Britain would do everything in its power to ensure this. The United States would also abide by the statements it had made in Geneva.

Trevelyan said that as to Thailand, he could understand why [the Thai government] would have some suspicions. However, while in China he had researched the situation of the Dai Autonomous Region, and knew that this autonomous region played a legally legitimate role. He also congratulated Premier Zhou, because Chinese government policy in this region had successfully resolved long-standing problems. As for Pai Nongrong, Trevelyan said he could also understand why the Thai government was worried that this person was being used for political purposes, because the Thai government must have read in Pravda that Pai was going to attend the World Peace Council-although later he didn't go. Trevelyan said that he was very happy to hear Zhou Enlai's assurance today that that this person was only a political exile in China on an individual basis.

Trevelyan said that, as for the Nationalist Party troops in Burma, Britain views them as scattered leftover bandits, moving from one country to another on their own strength. There is no one controlling them, nor is anyone directing their movements. The Laos government would not want them, and the United States also certainly has no ties to them. Trevelyan said that he would, however, report the Chinese government's fears on this matter to his government.

Trevelyan said he would like to reiterate that Britain believed the Southeast Asian Treaty to be purely defensive in nature, just like the treaty between China and the Soviet Union. Although China disagrees on this point, this is Britain's sincere view. This treaty is not aimed at China, nor is it aimed at anyone. This is Britain's firm belief.

As to the Taiwan issue, Trevelyan said, [I ask] Premier Zhou to please believe that Britain has researched and also understands China's position. Britain's only goal is to strive for peace, ease tensions, and to do so based on the facts and based on the practical situation. Britain has never wished to threaten China, and to do so would

also be foolish; Britain wishes to seek some solution to this extremely difficult problem, and hopes for peace for this region. Britain has its own policies. Although Eden has said that Britain's policies are very close to those of the United States, Britain does not follow anyone's policies. Britain works for peace with the methods it believes are best.

Trevelyan said that there is one thing in which it seems Premier Zhou places more trust than [I], and that is the accuracy of American press reports. Trevelyan said he had heard nothing of the piece of news Premier Zhou mentioned. That piece of news was completely mistaken, because it concerned a policy matter, and Eden would never discuss policy issues without the agreement of the House of Commons. The American press once concocted an absurd piece of news, and said it came from an official British source in Washington. This piece of news was about using the British naval fleet, and it was so absurd that the American press could only release it abroad—none of the United States' eastern newspapers carried it. Trevelyan said that from now on, if there are any press reports that Premier Zhou finds troubling, please bring it to Mr. Huang Hua's attention so that he can check up on it, because many reports are absolutely baseless.

Trevelyan said Britain's position on the whole Taiwan issue was already explained in precise terms by Sir Liding [sic--Phonetic Chinese] in the House of Lords on December 20 of last year; that is, on the issue of Taiwan, Britain's obligations are only those that it might possibly shoulder as a member of the United Nations.

Trevelyan finally said that he did not accept that British officials' remarks could in any way be construed as recognizing Jiang Jieshi and insulting the Chinese government. He said he wanted to state once more that while China and Britain did not necessarily have the same view of the facts, Britain was sincerely working for peace on the basis of fact, and would continue to do so. This was Britain's true intention. Trevelyan said that he would convey Premier Zhou's most recent thoughts to Eden. He also said that Eden had once wished to send Premier Zhou a letter on general political issues, and if Eden decided to do so, [he] might require an audience with Premier Zhou on short notice; he hoped Premier Zhou would not mind.

Trevelyan said he would like to add one thing. He said that Premier Zhou spoke very rightly, the British people are not hostile toward the Chinese people. He said that the British government is not hostile to the Chinese people, either.

Premier Zhou said that [we] thank Mr. Trevelyan for conveying our opinions to Foreign Secretary Eden. As to our continuing to differ in our explanations of some issues, when it comes to facts—facts are concrete; they exist. Our difference lies in that we [Chinese] are calling black what's actually black, and calling white what's actually white; one cannot flip reverse the two. Moreover, the United States has created facts and wants us to accept them; we can't accept facts just because they exist. We will oppose those facts that are unreasonable. Britain says that the United States is going to do this or has already done this, and wants us to accept it; we cannot do this, because it would be the same as accepting, in the past, what Hitler and the Japanese warlords did. This is the policy of appeasement, the policy of [the] Munich [Pact]. Herein lies the focal point of our dispute with Britain on the Taiwan issue and with the United States' policies all over Asia.

[You're] right, the British government has its own position. We understood this point while in Geneva. But after the Geneva Conference, many of Britain's policies, especially those on major world issues, followed the United States. This is one of the reasons that the United States is making trouble, intimidating [others] and creating tensions all over the world. This causes our two countries to form differing opinions on many vital issues like Taiwan and Indonesia. If the British government's policies allow the United States to continue on this way, the situation will worsen and

intensify. Under these serious circumstances, we cannot but request that Foreign Secretary Eden pay attention. Following the United States in this way not only deviates from the spirit of the Geneva Agreement, it goes in the opposite direction of it. China's people and government will not tolerate it.

Trevelyan said he wished to raise one point. He said there is a big difference between considering the facts and accepting the facts. Britain has never asked the Chinese government to accept the facts, but if Britain or any other nation is to look for solutions in the Far East, they ought to consider the facts. In 1939, Britain did not accept the fact of Hitler's invasion, but it gave the fact consideration. Trevelyan said that he did not raise this example in order to make any comparisons, nor did it contain any allusions; he was just giving an illustration.

Trevelyan said he recognized that what [they] were now discussing were serious and important problems; he would be certain, as in the past, to faithfully convey to [his] government those points which the Chinese government found upsetting. He said if it were cultural exchanges we were discussing, that would certainly be much easier, but [I] hope that through these kinds of discussions [we] can make progress in the way that both sides hoped.

Premier Zhou said he wished to say some final words regarding what Trevelyan had just said about considering the facts. China absolutely cannot accept facts that are unreasonable, the fact of invasion. If [we] are to consider the facts, we cannot distort the facts. Taiwan belongs to China; Britain has recognized this. Britain has also recognized that Taiwan has been returned to China. But the British government now says that Taiwan's status is yet to be decided; this is not only failing to take the facts into consideration, it is [trying] to change the facts. Even British public opinion has criticized this. The British government is saying this to gain favor with the United States, just as accepting Hitler's annexation of the Sudetenland in the past was to gain favor with Hitler. But problems cannot be resolved this way. The British government cannot ease tensions by putting itself in this sort of position; it can only increase tensions, abet the United States invasion, increase the Chinese people's indignation, [and] make the situation even worse. It is the same for the Taiwan issue, and for the Indochina issue. These [tensions] are just what the United States needs today; under tense circumstances, the United States occupied China's territory and elbowed aside French interests in Indochina. We believe that the United States would also make use of tense circumstances to encroach on British interests. If we're talking about the facts, many of Britain's interests have been subject to United States encroachment - and the United States counts as a British ally! The Chinese people oppose these activities on the part of the United States. As to whether these activities benefit Britain, we think [this] is not necessarily so. However, we can wait and see who suffers in the end if American policies are allowed to run rampant.

Trevelyan said he wished to raise another point. What Britain had said about Taiwan's legal status was not to gain favor with anybody, nor was it just being said now. He said that to his knowledge, this had been the opinion of legal scholars since 1950. He said Premier Zhou may have noted the debate on this issue in The Times. He said that while the Chinese government does not agree, this is a universally acknowledged legal opinion. Due to the lack of an international document making Taiwan a part of China, Taiwan has an international status. This has been the opinion of legal scholars for many years.

Trevelyan said he had already told London's Foreign Ministry to ascertain what exactly the British Foreign Ministry spokesperson had said on 25 August last year. He said that he did not have any information relating to this matter [here] in Beijing. He also said, It may be that journalists miscommunicated [the facts] after the spokesperson had talked to them. He said regardless of whether the aforementioned legal opinion is right or wrong, it is already a well-established opinion.

Premier Zhou said Britain's judgment of whether Taiwan belongs to China is all about finding a way out for the United States' policy of aggression. There can't be any other explanation. If [we] were to enter into this debate, we could find grounds-not only from British and American legal scholars, but even from Jiang Jieshi-to prove that there is no other possible explanation for Britain's judgment besides pandering to the United States. The American invasion of Taiwan is like a knife in China's heart; if Britain wants to ease tensions in the Far East, it should oppose this, but Britain means to safeguard this action. Legal scholars are capable of arguing that black is white for the sake of political goals. But there are also legal scholars who recognize that the Cairo Declaration, Potsdam Declaration and the Japanese Instrument of Surrender are legally binding. And we have already assumed control of Taiwan. We have also already assumed control of Manchuria, despite not having gone through the formality of an international document or anything of that sort. Based on Britain's reasoning, is Manchuria's status now also an open question, since Japan once occupied it and propped up a puppet government there? Is the status of Western European territory formerly occupied by Hitler also an open question since no treaty has been signed with Germany yet? How on earth does that make sense?! For [our] British friends to say this kind of thing to the Chinese people can only add to the Chinese people's indignation-there's no other explanation.

Trevelyan said that the Manchuria question had occurred to him as well; it seemed the answer to this question could also be applied to the formerly occupied territories of European countries. This answer was that, besides being recognized as Chinese territory, Manchuria had no other status. Besides being recognized as the territory of European countries, the formerly occupied European territories had no other status. He went on to say that he had to further research whether this answer was applicable to the formerly occupied territories of European countries, but that it was certainly applicable to Manchuria.

Premier Zhou persisted, Why do Taiwan and Manchuria appear side-by-side in the Cairo Declaration?

Trevelyan hemmed and hawed and said that the Cairo Declaration says that Taiwan and Manchuria should both be returned to China.

Premier Zhou said they have already both been returned to China.

Trevelyan had no answer to this, and could only say, Britain completely understands China's position.

Premier Zhou said this is not a legal dispute, it is a political dispute. The law is obedient to politics, for political goals, and manufactures specious arguments accordingly. This cannot convince people.

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