

March 21, 1955

Letter from Humphrey Trevelyan to Zhou Enlai

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Office of Her Britannic Majesty's
Charge d'Affaires,
PEKING.
March 21, 1955.

No. 45

Your Excellency,

I transmitted to Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Your Excellency's Aide Memoire dated the 25th of February 1955. I have now been instructed by Sir Anthony Eden to send to Your Excellency the following reply:

["]Her Majesty's Government cannot agree that there is any incompatibility between the Geneva Agreements and the Manila Treaty. At Geneva Her Majesty's Government undertook, as did the Chinese Government, to respect the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. At Manila, Her Majesty's Government and other powers undertook to consult together if the sovereignty, independence or territorial integrity of Cambodia, Laos and South Vietnam were threatened as well as to act to meet the common danger in the event of armed attack on any of these countries. In effect therefore, the Manila Treaty, far from violating the Geneva Agreements, constituted an undertaking to uphold them. It did not affect the neutrality of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, none of whom participated in the Manila Treaty. The designation of these countries was intended as a guarantee of their neutralisation, under the Geneva Agreements and can never come into operation unless some other power attempts to violate their neutrality. In particular, the designation of South Vietnam does not imply any intention on the part of the signatories to the Manila Treaty to interfere with the eventual settlement of political problems in Vietnam as a result of the free general elections specified by the Geneva Agreement.

No attempt was made at the Bangkok Conference by the United States or any other signatory of the Manila Treaty to bring Cambodia, Laos and South Vietnam into any military alliance and Her Majesty's Government cannot accept the Chinese Government's statement that such attempts are being made.

On the other hand there is nothing in the Geneva Agreements to prevent United States assistance in the training and reorganisation of the Vietnamese army, provided this assistance does not involve the introduction of additional military personnel or war materiel or the establishment of new military bases contrary to the provisions of Articles 16-18 of the Agreement on the cessation of hostilities. Her Majesty's Government do not believe that United States assistance has involved any of these things. If the Chinese Government believe that they have evidence to the contrary, presumably they will submit this to the International Supervisory Committee, whose function it is to decide whether or not a violation of the Geneva Agreements has occurred. The Chinese Government will presumably have noted from the interim reports of the International Supervisory Committee for Vietnam that in the Commission's opinion no such evidence has yet been forthcoming. In any event Her Majesty's Government, as representing one of the co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference on Indo China, cannot take cognisance of the alleged violations of the Geneva Agreements until these are confirmed by the appropriate International Supervisory Commission and, if not resolved by the Commission, reported to the members of the Conference.

I avail myself of this opportunity to renew Your Excellency the assurance of my highest consideration.["]

His Excellency
Mr. Chou En-lai [Zhou Enlai]
Premier of the State Council and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Peking.

(Humphrey Trevelyan)