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Zhou Enlai's Telegram to the CCP Central Committee and Mao Zedong regarding the Discussion of Political Issues

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[To the] CCP Central Committee and Chairman [Mao Zedong]:

From the very beginning, the discussion of the political issues at the Asian-African

Conference clearly showed the struggle between two different lines. On one hand, there were attempts to use anti-Soviet and anti-communist slogans to bog the conference down in a debate on ideology, to prevent the conference from achieving anything. On the other hand, there were efforts to affirm all common points on the basis of opposition to colonialism and maintenance of world peace and cooperation in order to enable the conference to reflect the common wishes of African and Asian people as much as possible. The results of the conference proved that the second line was largely successful.

I. Opening Speeches: During the opening speeches at the open sessions on 18 and 19 April, virtually all delegations expressed opposition to colonialism and called for peace. However, Iraq, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, and Turkey all put forward anti-Soviet and anti-communist slogans, claiming that the old colonialism has gradually become something of the past, while the so-called new colonialism, in reference to the Soviet Union, has become a new threat to the world. They also asserted that communist rule is one-party dictatorship and autocracy, that communism suppresses dissents, restricts worship, and, at its worst, turns foreign tyranny into domestic tyranny. Moreover, they accused communism of engaging in subversive activities in other countries. Thai delegates specifically brought up an issue relating to China's Dai Autonomous Region. The Chinese delegation emphasized "the need to seek common ground while reserving differences" in statements and supplementary speeches, calling on the conference to affirm the general desire for opposing colonialism and racial discrimination, striving for national independence, maintaining world peace, and promoting friendly cooperation, and to avoid being bogged down in a debate on ideology. The Chinese delegation also provided explanations and refutations concerning the worship issue and so-called subversive activities, and took the initiative to invite the delegations of all participating nations to visit China and see with their own eyes.

II. Agenda and Procedures: Regarding the procedural issue, the heads of the delegations held an informal meeting on 17 April and reached an agreement based on the draft of procedures jointly proposed by India, Indonesia, and Burma. It was also proposed that all delegations present their opening remarks in a written form rather than orally at the conference so as to save time. However, at the meeting on 18 April, Turkey, Pakistan, and some other countries adamantly opposed the proposal under the pretext of their absence from the 17 April meeting. After an adjournment, the heads of the delegations again held an informal meeting, agreeing that opening speeches could be presented at the sole discretion of the delegation, either in a written form or orally at the conference. Turkey, Pakistan, and some other countries also demanded that the original agenda be revised. After revision, in addition to the original two topics—economic cooperation (including the peaceful use of atomic energy) and cultural cooperation—the agenda covered the following political issues:

First, human rights and self-determination, including the Palestine issue and the racial discrimination issue.

Second, the issue relating to the dependent peoples, including those in Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, and Netherlands New Guinea.

Third, promotion of world peace and cooperation, including the United Nations (UN) issue, the issue relating to weapons of mass destruction, the disarmament issue, and the Indochina issue.

It was agreed that all of these politics would be discussed from 20 April at the closed-door sessions of the political committee comprised of the heads of all delegations.

III. Human Rights and Self-Determination: The discussion of human rights revealed the

attempts of Turkey and Pakistan to demand the introduction of a UN resolution for each decision made at the meetings. Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan called on the conference to support the UN's declaration on human rights. India stated that the general human rights principles in the UN Charter could be supported, but it was not necessary to involve special UN documents. We agreed with India's opinion. After the repeated discussion, we agreed to support the UN Charter in the resolution, but in the specific documents on the declaration of human rights, the phrase "taking note of" would be used, so that we would not be constrained. This helped obtain a consensus at the conference (*some other details omitted*). Subsequently, on the self-determination issue, we have proactively proposed a motion in support of the UN Charter and "taking note of" related UN resolutions (this was a good resolution), winning unanimous approval at the conference, thereby foiling the attempts of Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq, and some other countries to disrupt the conference by pinning the UN against the Asian-African Conference.

On the Palestine issue, out of concern for their own relations with Israel, India and Burma were reluctant to lend full support to Arab countries' demands. We expressed full sympathy and support for Arab countries' position and gave favorable impressions to Arab countries, especially Egypt and Syria. They subsequently lent support to us on certain issues.

IV. Dependent Peoples: At the conference, on the Netherlands New Guinea and North Africa issue, we expressed our support of Indonesia's demand to restore territorial sovereignty and the Tunisian, Moroccan, Algerian and Syrian people's demands for national independence.

Following the discussion on the Netherlands New Guinea and North African issue, the Ceylon delegate again brought up the so-called new colonialism and old colonialism issue, slandering the Soviet Union for implementing new colonialism in Eastern European countries. The following day, nine countries, namely Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Liberia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sudan, and Turkey, presented a joint motion demanding the conference to condemn "colonialism in all manifestations, including international doctrines on the use of force and infiltrative and subversive means" and condemn "all forms of political, social, economic, cultural, intellectual and spiritual control of people," and calling on all participating countries and all other countries "not to implement any form of colonialism."

Faced with Ceylon's provocation, we gave a warning immediately after the adjournment. India, Indonesia, Burma, and Syria all voiced opposition, demanding not to discuss the issue. The Ceylon Prime Minister expressed his willingness for reconciliation. However, Turkey, Pakistan, and some other countries again submitted the motion on the following day, making a discussion inevitable. We adopted the guideline of making clear our position without being influenced by the proactive action. On one hand, we pointed out that the accusation that the Soviet Union implemented new colonialism in East European countries was not in accordance with the facts and that we resolutely opposed such accusations. We again requested the conference to "seek common ground while reserving differences" and expressed our willingness to meet with people who wanted to discuss the issue outside of the conference. On the other hand, before the nine countries submitted their joint motion, we worked out a counter motion on the basis of the positive points in Ceylon's speech. Afterwards, in the panel discussion, on the basis of our motion, a joint motion concerning the dependent peoples was gradually formed by China, India, Burma, and Syria. The motion "supports the cause of freedom and independence of all dependent peoples" and "calls on colonial countries to give them freedom and independence with procrastination." In the panel discussion, there were two motions— the Nine-Country Motion and the Four-Country Motion. No agreement had been reached after two days of discussion.

The two motions concerning dependent peoples proposed three different solutions. The first solution was to permit the adoption of some relatively ambiguous interpretations for the wording of the resolution, thereby obtaining unanimous consensus. The second solution was to put both the Nine-Country Motion and the Four-Country Motion on record but make no mention of the issue in the final communiqué. The third solution was to state that the conference had failed to reach a consensus and describe both sides' positions in the final communiqué. Later, this issue

was forwarded to the panel for the promotion of world peace and cooperation. We saw that the first solution was adopted, and the wording “colonialism in all manifestations” was used in the resolution, maintaining the consensus of the conference. Thus, we have not only obtained a consensus on the colonialism issue and have avoided the inclusion of any unfavorable interpretation into the communiqué, but have also attained the release of the Declaration on World Peace and Cooperation.

V. Promotion of World Peace and Cooperation: Regarding the UN issue, I did not request the inclusion of the restoration of our representation rights into the agenda. With regard to the countries listed in the resolution which were qualified to take part in the UN, the conference originally did not elaborate but merely referred to the countries participating in the conference. This was later revised upon my insistence. Concerning the issues relating to weapons of mass destruction and disarmament, Turkey, Pakistan, and some other countries have stressed that a prohibition of atomic weapons should be accompanied by a reduction of conventional armaments. I did not challenge this. As for the Indochina issue, India had originally filed a motion for supporting and faithfully implementing the Geneva Accords. Due to South Vietnam’s groundless objection, the motion was withdrawn by India out of fury.

With respect to the main issue of peaceful coexistence, we proposed a “Declaration of Peace” motion, which included all positive points in all motions filed by the participating countries. In order to obtain a unanimous consensus, in our motion, the first four of the “Five Principles” were rewritten into seven principles, that is, “respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression and not threatening each other, abstention from intervention or interference in the internal affairs of another country, recognition of the equality of all races and the equality of all nations large and small, respect for the freedom of people in any nation to choose their own way of life and political and economic systems, and mutual benefit and mutual non-harm.” As for the “Peaceful Coexistence” item, it was changed to “live together in peace” as shown in the UN Charter. In our motion, we have also called for the use of peaceful means to settle international disputes, disarmament, devotion of atomic energy to peaceful purposes, and prohibition of atomic weapons and all weapons of mass destruction. All of the seven items in our original motion were included in the final adopted version of the “Declaration on the Promotion of World Peace and Cooperation.” The two added main items were related to self-defense. On this issue, due to the insistence of Turkey, Pakistan, and some other countries, the Conference acknowledged that each nation has the right to defend itself singly or collectively in conformity with the UN Charter. On the other hand, with the insistence of India, Egypt and us, the Conference called for an abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defense to serve the particular interests of any of the big powers and an abstention by any country from exerting pressures on other countries.

VI. Next Meeting of the Asian-African Conference: Finally, as proposed by us, the Conference recommended that the five sponsoring countries consider the convening of the next meeting of the Conference in consultation with the participating countries. On this issue, India and Burma were not very enthusiastic, but the Philippines, Thailand, Turkey, and some other nations immediately expressed consent. As for the setup of a permanent body, prior to the Conference, India and Burma told me that they thought it was unnecessary, and therefore the idea was not brought up. But it was agreed that liaison officers would be appointed for the exchange of information and opinions on economic issues.

VII. The Communiqué: A final communiqué was prepared on the basis of the resolutions of the economic, cultural and political committees. The communiqué was read out at the open session on 24 April and was adopted. In the closing speeches of the Conference, although certain countries, such as Turkey and Iraq, interpreted the resolution on dependent peoples to be a condemnation of “colonialism in all manifestations,” all other nations hailed the consensus reached at the Conference.

Zhou Enlai

30 April 1955