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Record of Conversation between Premier Zhou Enlai and the President of Pakistan Ayub Khan

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Summary:

Zhou, Ayub Khan, and Zulfikar Bhutto discuss the Vietnam War, China's relations with the US and the Soviet Union, the Second Asian-African Conference, and the Non-Aligned Movement.

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Record of Premier Zhou Enlai's Conversation with Pakistan President Ayub Khan
(Premier has yet to review or approve)

Time: Around 5 p.m., 2 April 1965
Place: Presidential Palace

(Premier Zhou conveyed to Ayub greetings from Chairman Mao [Zedong], President Liu Shaoqi, and other leaders of our country and thanked him for repeatedly praising China in his speeches after returning to Pakistan. On behalf of the Chinese Government, the Premier also thanked him for presenting our country with a bull at the National Horse and Cattle Show in Lahore.

Ayub also asked that Premier Zhou convey his regards to our country's leaders and wish them good health. He again thanked the Chinese side for its kind hospitality during his recent visit to China.)

Zhou: I have just spoken with Foreign Minister [Zulfikar Ali] Bhutto regarding the details of my exchange of views with [Gamel Abdel] Nasser and [Ahmed] Ben Bella on the Second Asian-African Conference. Let me speak briefly now on it. This time I will initially determine the following four points: (1) The conference time will no longer change. Ben Bella has confirmed this point. The preparatory work can be completed by 29 June. (2) Based on the spirit of the Bandung Conference, the conference matters will be handled on the basis of the principles of consensus and seeking common ground while putting aside differences. (3) If a participating country wishes to raise a new agenda item, it can only do so at the foreign ministers conference. (4) With regard to the issue of Soviet participation, we have reaffirmed the principle of the Jakarta foreign ministers conference's consensus not to have Soviet participation. The reasons are the same as raised in the Jakarta preparatory meeting.

After the Jakarta preparatory meeting, we received from the Soviet Union a statement that it would not take the initiative to request participation in the conference and, if anyone raised the issue of Soviet participation as not to the benefit of the Asian-African Conference, the Soviet Union could consider not attending the conference. Ben Bella and Nasser said that they also received the same document (Ayub: We also received it.).

Speaking a moment ago with Foreign Minister Bhutto, I said that in future work, China, Pakistan and Indonesia must closely cooperate and talk over matters. We must strengthen preparatory work in April and May. We can exchange views on some specific proposals in April and May, reach agreement, and thereby better hold the conference.

Zhou: In my visit this time to two African countries, both were very concerned about the development of the situation in Southeast Asia. I know that when Marshal Chen Yi visited Pakistan, he spoke a bit with Your Excellency the President as well.

Ayub: We, too, are very worried. We do not know when this large-scale bombing will end.

Zhou: The United States mistakenly believes that increasing the aggression against south Vietnam and expanding the bombing of north Vietnam will force Vietnam into

submission. Such thinking will be a total failure.

The African friends we visited this time, and our European friends Romania and Albania as well, are all very concerned about this issue. There are three issues in all: (1) In a situation of increasing US aggression and pressure, the Vietnamese people and the people of Indochina will suffer great losses if they can resist US aggression; if unable to resist, they will concede in the face of a huge threat. They worry that if Vietnam yields to US pressure, others elsewhere around the world will suffer similar losses, such as in Pakistan and Congo (Brazzaville). In fact, the United States is putting pressure on countries everywhere around the world where it has armed forces. Naturally, the four countries mentioned agree that the key issue is Vietnam. US public opinion, the Pentagon, the White House, and the press also see it this way. (2) There is concern over the war expanding and, in the face of resistance, escalating to a world war. (3) Between concession and world war, there is the issue of whether or not negotiation is possible.

I analyzed and answered these issues.

(1) There exists no possibility of Vietnam yielding. On 22 March, the National Front for the Liberation of Southern Vietnam issued its strongest statement. They firmly believe that the south Vietnam puppet army will progressively collapse and that they can defeat the puppet army. The troops sent by the United States can only protect a small part of all the cities and seaports. According to the US plan, they can redeploy at most only three divisions. One is a US infantry division, one is a unit of US marines stationed on Okinawa, and a third pieced together from such vassal countries as the Philippines, south Korea, and Thailand. But these troops can only protect south Vietnam's seaports, cities, and bases. The United States is thinking to use these troops in place of regular troops of the south Vietnam puppet army in order to use the regular troops to counter the south Vietnamese people. The National Front for the Liberation of Southern Vietnam believes that it can eliminate the puppet army. The US authorities worry about what the US troops would do after the elimination of the puppet army. If they leave the fortified bases, they would also suffer the same failure. At present its air force and army are both ceaselessly being eliminated. The south Vietnam puppet regime has changed a dozen times, almost none convincing to the United States. Ngo Dinh Diem and his younger brother were killed by the Americans. The United States is considering, when sending troops, to sign an agreement with the puppet regime, explaining that it is the puppet regime that is requesting the troop dispatch. In this way, if the current bogus regime in Saigon should cease to exist, the agreement would still be valid. Is this not some incredible story? The United States and Chiang Kai-she have signed many treaties. But after the People's Liberation Army occupied Nanjing, there was no way to maintain the treaties. The only exception is Taiwan. Now the United States is thinking to use an agreement to handle matters in south Vietnam. It seems to me that governments in exile under US protection will all be on the island. The United States must increase its navy for transport everywhere and protection everywhere. In fact, the United States has long known that it has lost in south Vietnam but is unwilling to withdraw from there and so have come up with this way to struggle.

On the other hand, the United States is trying to subjugate north Vietnam by expanding the bombing of north Vietnam. In August and September, the United States bombed north Vietnam one or twice a week. From the latter half of March to the present, there has been bombing nearly every day. Against this, the National Front for the Liberation of Southern Vietnam has stated that, no matter how long the struggle, it will fight on until victory. The Democratic Republic of the Vietnam (DRV) government responded to the statement of the National Front for the Liberation of Southern Vietnam by saying that it was prepared to provide south Vietnam all assistance necessary. The Korean government also issued a statement in response. China, too, published via an editorial in the People's Daily of 25 March, determined to support the people of south Vietnam achieve victory and is ready to give every

assistance, including arms, to the people of south Vietnam. When the people of south Vietnam are in need of it, China will send Chinese personnel to fight in cooperation with the people of south Vietnam. Although this was only an editorial, foreign reaction was strong, particularly that of the United States. Foreign Minister Chen Yi, in a response to the DRV foreign minister, also reiterated this position. World public opinion also protested against the United States. The United States is bombing the DRV, which has already carried out evacuations and is determined to aid their south Vietnamese brothers to the end.

Under such circumstances, what is US policy? The propaganda of the United States also reflects its contradictory situation. On the one hand, US propaganda states that if Vietnam does not stop its "aggression," the United States will have to expand its aggression. This is the gangster logic of imperialism, which is the height of absurdity. South Vietnam's resistance to US aggression is "aggression." North Vietnam's providing support to south Vietnam is "aggression" against its own compatriots. Well, then, the resistance of Algeria's National Liberation Front (FNL) against French colonialism, too, was Algeria's "aggression" against Algeria and the United Arab Republic (UAR)'s recovery of its sovereignty over the Suez Canal, too, was the "aggression" of the Egyptians against Egyptians. This issue, along with those of the UAR and Algeria, is clear. It is entirely US gangster logic.

On the other hand, the United States has also stated in its propaganda that the expansion of the war will be limited to south Vietnam alone so long as north Vietnam stops supporting south Vietnam. The United States intends to separate south Vietnam and north Vietnam, making south Vietnam feel isolated.

The United States said when it was expanding its bombing of north Vietnam that the expanded bombing was limited to north Vietnam and that the United States had no intention of fighting China. It did not only issue such propaganda but also made such a statement in the ambassadorial-level talks between China and the United States in Warsaw. The British foreign secretary said after talks in Washington that Britain had obtained US confirmation that it would not expand the war to China. As a result, the British prime minister said that he was reassured. This shows that the US objective is to separate China from Vietnam and make the Vietnamese feel isolated.

The policy of the United States is wavering. First, calling for the Vietnamese to stop their aggression against the Vietnamese is irrational. Second, it is wavering in regard to the war's expansion. At every step, it must stop and look. Their policy is unsettled. [Maxwell] Taylor has returned to Washington in part to discuss this issue, that is, whether or not sending troops to south Vietnam would be beneficial to the United States and to what extent to expand the scope of the bombing.

After the publishing of the editorial in our People's Daily and Foreign Minister Chen Yi's sending of a letter of response to the foreign minister of the DRV, the United States said that the Chinese people were only talking and that they would not play a real role in the resistance of the people of south Vietnam. Sometimes, the United States also says that it cannot grasp whether or not China would really go to war. This shows that there is no clear basis to US policy. They carry out aggression, feel in the wrong, and are without a leg to stand on. However, they refuse to admit defeat and withdraw (but withdrawal would be the best way for it to save face). Moving forward will only result in a greater loss of face. As they are in the wrong, their policy is wavering.

Ayub: The United States seems not to suspect that, if they put pressure on north Vietnam and south Vietnam, China will have to send troops. They are suspicious of whether or not the Soviet Union would provide aid.

Zhou: There are grounds for what you are proposing. Wait a moment. I will revisit this

and speak of whether or not it would develop into world war. Now let us speak first of the first issue, which is that of pressure. Vietnam will not give in to pressure. The result of the United States using all its power in Vietnam and Indochina can only be failure and loss of face.

If, when the President visits the United States, the United States asks what China will do, Your Excellency can inform the United States of the following three points:

Point 1: China will never provoke. Taiwan is proof of that. We entirely have the sovereign right to recover Taiwan, but we have never used weapons because the US 7th Fleet is in the Taiwan Strait. We have been negotiating it in Warsaw.

Point 2: China keeps its word. China certainly will fulfill all promised international obligations.

Ayub: We understand this point.

Zhou: With regard to the second point, there is also proof. China had not been liberated a year when the United States launched a war of invasion against Korea, at the same time sending the 7th Fleet into the Taiwan Strait in an attempt to obstruct China from recovering Taiwan. China informed the United States via India's ambassador to China at that time that if the United States crossed the 38th parallel and approached the Yalu River, China would absolutely not ignore it. At that time the Indian government did indeed inform the US government. But the United States did not listen, not believing that China would aid Korea. When Your Excellency the President goes this time to the United States, tell them these points. Perhaps they will still not believe it. Perhaps, as the President says, they will be able to believe it. Both possibilities exist. But this time our friend has changed, being not India but Pakistan. (general laughter)

Ayub: They should understand that if the pressure is too great, China will provide assistance. Every reasonable person should understand this point. The United States says that they will not expand the war to China, wanting to see to what extent the Soviets would take part in it. The United States believes that the Soviet Union may not take part in it and will gauge the extent of Soviet assistance in expanding the war or not.

Zhou: (2) As for whether or not it will expand to world war, Your Excellency is a field marshal and know that the rules of war do not change according to the will of the individual. The United States believes that if it does not expand its aggression against Vietnam to China, then China will not aid Vietnam. We believe that, even if it does not drag in China, China will all the same aid the Vietnamese people and will all the same resist. What does dragging in China mean? As long as the DRV requests it, so long as the National Front for the Liberation of Southern Vietnam requests it, that means dragging in China. When war expands, there is no way to draw a line. As with playing with fire, it will expand. The United States wants to play with fire and take chances. China wants to extinguish the fire. The United States does not and wants to add fuel to it. As a result, the fire will burn higher and higher. The United States is responsible for the war's expansion. We are not provoking it. Even though China has exercised restraint in many aspects, if the United States expands the war in this position, the war inevitably will burn and spread. The United States says that this is a local war and that it has conducted limited bombings and limited expansion. Even if it subjectively wishes to limit the war's expansion, in fact it cannot be limited. Although the United States has threatened that, if the war in Indochina developed into something similar to the Korean War, it would not resemble a limited one like the Korean War. Rather, it would expand to China, and there would be no place to take shelter. We know this. China is prepared.

We are prepared. This is the third thing that Your Excellency can relay to the United States. The United States says that China is not prepared to fight and so is deceiving people. China is not at all prepared to fight with the United States. Your Excellency the President said yesterday in his broadcast speech that China loves peace. When the President visited Beijing and Shanghai, he also saw that the people of Beijing and Shanghai were not prepared to launch a war. Militarily, however, we cannot but prepare. If the United States should light the fire of war, we cannot but extinguish it. The United States attempts by war of the type fought in Korea, not limited to the DRV and Indochina, to scare China and isolate Vietnam. This is unrealistic thinking.

If the United States expands the war, in the end it will escalate to China. Against this, we must be prepared in spirit and in fact. We hope that our Asian friends, when they have the opportunity to speak to the American people, tell them that they must see the danger of playing with fire, that there exists the possibility of the war expanding, and that at that time the American people will be drawn into a major war.

The question is whether or not, following the war's expansion, it would continue expanding . Your Excellency a moment ago asked whether, in the event that the war expanded to China, the Soviet Union would intervene. We cannot answer this question. You are going tomorrow to visit the Soviet Union, so you can ask the Soviet friends and let them answer themselves. As for us, we are not giving consideration to this issue, nor are we counting on Soviet aid.

It will be an ordeal for the United States if it expands the war to China. There are already two field marshals in the world who have said the following. You will be the third one. Britain's Field Marshal [Bernard] Montgomery twice visited China. He advised his American friends that, if the United States hit China, they would be able to go in but would be unable to go out. In the forward area they would be able to open a new front, but the rear area would be unmanageable. [Douglas] MacArthur, soon before he died, also said this (although in Japan he had commanded the war against Korea). He informed [Dwight D.] Eisenhower and [John F.] Kennedy. [Lyndon B.] Johnson, too, can recall the following point. If the United States forced war on the Chinese people, the Chinese people would resist to the end. There is no other way out. Under such circumstances, there is a faction in the United States that says that the United States would only conduct bombings and not use its ground forces. Your Excellency is a field marshal. You know that fighting a war in this way cannot resolve the problem. If they bombed us from the air, we could use other means on the ground to move about everywhere. If the United States conducted full-scale bombing against China, then that would be war, and war has no boundaries. All military men know this. Since China would be an ordeal for the United States, how could it expand to other parts of the world? So there is no need to answer the question of whether the Soviet Union would intervene, nor do we have to count on the Soviet Union. If the United States expanded the war in establishing a policy on the idea that China and the Soviet Union would not cooperate to resist aggression, then it would fail in advance. If the Chinese people bore greater sacrifices for the benefit of the people of the world, it would be worth it. I told President Ben Bella that, in that case, the liberation of the people of Africa would be a little faster. I told President Nasser that victory in the Palestinian people's struggle to return to their homeland would thus be faster. Today I can tell Your Excellency that the liberation of Kashmir would certainly be a little faster.

In summary, the three things we are saying are: (1) China will not provoke a war, (2) China keeps its word, and (3) China has prepared.

We are close friends, so I will tell you the truth. Particularly as you are going to visit the Soviet Union and the United States, I should more clearly tell you.

The United States will be unable to pass the barrier that is China and will only fail all

the more if it expands it into a world war.

(3) Whether or not it would be possible to negotiate and resolve the issue

China does not fundamentally oppose negotiations. Any issue can be resolved in the end through negotiation. However, the conditions and timing are not yet ripe for negotiating the south Vietnam issue. The United States has put forward as conditions for negotiations Vietnam stopping its "aggression," the National Front for the Liberation of Southern Vietnam stopping its resistance, giving the puppet regime a chance to breathe, and allowing the United States to continue to put pressure on south Vietnam. The United States says that any action of the people of south Vietnam is commanded by north Vietnam. There is no way to negotiate under such conditions. Negotiating this way even for 10 years would resolve nothing.

Negotiations between China and the United States have been taking place for 10 years, without any result. We are patient because Taiwan is such a large piece and can no longer grow, and Chiang Kai-shek and his troops are growing ever older and must all die one day. China grows stronger by the day and one day will be able to negotiate a resolution to the issue. This is the Taiwan issue, and we can adopt such a method. One cannot adopt such a method for the south Vietnam issue. If one stopped resistance, perhaps only for a year, the number of those who would die in this period would be much greater than those who would die in the war. The National Front for the Liberation of Southern Vietnam has put forth that it cannot negotiate now, which is the correct position.

Recently, the Non-Aligned Countries issued a letter of appeal for negotiations to resolve the south Vietnam issue (Bhutto: Yugoslavia yesterday delivered this letter of appeal.). Yugoslavia is taking the lead in this play, with the Soviet Union directing the performance from behind the curtains. It does not at all respect the views of those involved. The Vietnamese are not at present in favor of negotiations. The Soviet Union has already asked the DRV government, and Vietnam has said that the conditions were not ripe for negotiation and that the time for negotiations had not yet arrived. The Soviet Union asked China its view. We said that we would reply after asking for Vietnam's view. But the Soviet Union, in spite of Vietnam's opposition and without waiting for China's response, colluded with France, Britain, and the United States. The DRV issued a statement opposing negotiations; the National Front for the Liberation of Southern Vietnam also issued a statement. The Soviet Union, finding the situation difficult this time, has called on [Josip Broz] Tito to go forth and act.

At present the situation is clear. Tito said that he would issue a strong statement against the US bombing of north Vietnam and would send a representative to Cairo. He said that he would not issue the document if it did not achieve the objective of strongly condemning the United States. Many neutral countries approved of this point and entrusted their ambassadors in Belgrade to meet there. At the start, Tito and Cuba together wanted to condemn the United States. However, some of the invited neutral countries did not approve of it. On the basis of Tito's original intent, the document should have been withdrawn. However, Tito quickly put together a weak letter of appeal, one which fundamentally did not condemn the United States but only vaguely opposed foreign interference. This term can be understood both as opposition to US interference and as opposition to the interference of other countries. After I informed Nasser and Ben Bella of the actual situation, they finally saw the light. Ben Bella acknowledged that Vietnam could not agree to unconditional negotiations. The communique of China and Algeria said that the United States should withdraw from south Vietnam and let south Vietnam resolve its own issues. The communique strongly condemned US aggression and military actions against north Vietnam. Ben Bella also acknowledged that attending this Conference of Non-Aligned Countries was a shortcoming. Nasser said that it was a mistake for the UAR to have rashly agreed with Tito's view without understanding the situation. Tito can mislead many people. Pakistan understands this point. I indicated to Nasser that

Tito's saying that he would strongly condemn the United States was to deceive them. After winning over the neutral countries, he stood on the side of the United States. In the end, Cuba and Mali did not sign the letter of appeal.

Bhutto: Good.

Ayub: Good.

Zhang [Wenjin]: Seventeen countries in total signed it.

Zhou: Tito has been double-dealing for many years.

Bhutto: That is why [Jawaharlal] Nehru and Tito are good friends.

Ayub: It is hard to say which of them is the bigger double-dealer.

Zhou: I said to Nasser that I was suspicious of Tito. I asked Nasser what he thought of Tito's relations with Israel. Nasser said that they were not bad. I grasped this key issue. Several UAR friends present there, including Deputy Premier Ali Sabry, laughed. This shows that Tito does not at all support the Arab countries. He will one day be ruined, just like [Nikita] Khrushchev, but that will be later, because he is even more cunning.

Why have I said that the Soviet Union is directing this? Because when the representative of a country concerned passed the letter of appeal to the Soviet Union, [Alexei] Kosygin met with the delegation and said that it was worth studying how to carry out this appeal. Kosygin said that the negotiations were mainly between Vietnam and the United States. [Dean] Rusk immediately came out and said that he had no objection to negotiating, but Vietnam would have to stop its aggression. Forcing Vietnam to stop its "aggression" against Vietnam is negotiating with conditions. This is a play.

There are complicated and major changes taking place in international relations. Pakistan allies with the United States; China allies with the Soviet Union. But those in charge of China and Pakistan can have a frank and heart-to-heart talk. I can even tell you everything that I am thinking. Of course, this is not to be made public.

Ayub: Our alliance with the United States is not what you think it is.

Zhou: You also know the current state of the Sino-Soviet alliance. It is because of mutual understanding that we can talk about it. Today I have spoken mainly about these three issues. I have already spoken with the foreign minister regarding the Asian-African Conference issue.

Ayub: We thank you for speaking of these issues.

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