

May 15, 1954

**Telegram, Zhou Enlai to Mao Zedong and Others,
Requesting Instructions on the Korean Issue and
Regarding the Situation at the Fourth Plenary
Session on the Indochina Issue**

Citation:

"Telegram, Zhou Enlai to Mao Zedong and Others, Requesting Instructions on the Korean Issue and Regarding the Situation at the Fourth Plenary Session on the Indochina Issue", May 15, 1954, Wilson Center Digital Archive, PRC FMA 206-Y0049. Translated by Gao Bei. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/110623>

Summary:

Zhou Enlai reports to the CCP on his meeting with Anthony Eden, the fourth plenary session on Indochina, and his meeting with the Soviet and Korean representatives. During the fourth session, representatives from Russia and France spoke on their positions on the armistice in Indochina.

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

Chairman Mao, Comrade [Liu] Shaoqi and the Central Committee:

(1) Eden came to see me in the morning yesterday. He mostly wanted to gauge my opinion on the Indochina issue and said that he hoped to hold a restricted session. I did not answer his five questions on the Indochina issue directly except to give my support to Pham Van Dong's proposals. I simply asked him indirectly to explain what he meant by "all forces should be concentrated in the determined areas." He said that it meant that troops of both sides should be withdrawn to areas determined by their respective commanders, and that this plan should then be ratified by the Geneva Conference. I therefore perceived that Britain does have a plan to delimit [the country]. However, it is still not clear that the British want to delimit [the country] between North and South, or to handle Haiphong differently. Nevertheless, it is obvious that France and the United States do not want to withdraw from the Red River Delta. I have already cabled the summary of my conversation with Eden separately. I agreed to hold a restricted session after consulting with the Soviet, Chinese, and Vietnamese delegations.

(2) Molotov spoke first at the fourth session on the Indochina issue this afternoon. He attacked both Bidault's misrepresentation of history and Bao Dai's legal status, and supported Pham Van Dong's statement on anti-colonial rule and colonial war. The main point of Molotov's speech was to make the commission of neutral nations' supervision of the armistice a supplementary proposal. He said that he could not completely agree to the international guarantee stated in France's proposal. Specifically, he agreed to guarantee jointly collective consultation and collective action, but refused to agree to individual actions. Please refer to TASS's broadcasts to see the full text of Molotov's speech. Bidault and the Laotian delegation also made speeches at the session. Bidault still behaved like a colonialist. He refused to recognize the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and expressed his support of Bao Dai and the kingdoms of Cambodia and Laos. Although Bidault still repeated his unreasonable arguments, his tone was relatively milder than on the two previous occasions he spoke. He accepted Pham's basic position on peace, independence, unification and democracy. However, he said that all these had already been accomplished. Bidault also responded one by one to Pham Van Dong's eight proposals, besides explaining three of his own. Bidault said that France had already recognized Vietnam's autonomy and independence throughout the country as well as the independence of Cambodia and Laos. Cambodia and Laos had already signed agreements with France and became members of the federation. Therefore, Pham Van Dong's first and fourth points became unnecessary. Concerning Pham's second point, Bidault said that French troops in a country which is an ally of France cannot be considered as typical "foreign" troops. However, France, on the advice of interested governments, should be prepared to recall its own forces if invading troops will also be withdrawn. Bidault believed that the Laos and Cambodia issues could be resolved simply by withdrawing the Viet Minh troops. However, he argued that in discussions the Laos and Cambodia issues should be separated from the Vietnam issue. Regarding Pham's third point, Bidault said that elections must be supervised. A political solution will only be possible after a military settlement. The process of negotiating a political solution will only delay the implementation of a military settlement. On Pham's fifth point, Bidault stated that since Vietnam had already consulted with France about the economic and cultural interests of France in Vietnam, these would never be conditions [to concluding hostilities]. Bidault agreed to the sixth and seventh points that Pham had raised. On the eighth point, Bidault said that 8(a) was ambiguous since it did not clarify whether or not the agreement on political conditions should be reached before the armistice. He emphasized that the ceasefire in Vietnam should be extended gradually from one region to another to reach a complete armistice. Bidault stated that Pham's proposals on concentration areas (for stationing troops) and readjustment areas were basically the same as the first point of the first section of the French proposal. Regarding the armistice in Laos, Bidault believed that it wouldn't be a problem as long as the Viet Minh withdrew its troops. He pointed out that 8(b), on transporting weapons across the border, needed additional and clearer regulations. On 8(c), on the issue of supervision, Bidault

believed that international supervision is essential. Bidault also said that it was obvious that the Soviet delegation made the same argument in their speeches. He then proposed to disarm the irregular forces and once again raised the issue of the guarantee [of all these agreements] ensured by participants of the Geneva Conference. The speech of the Cambodian delegation still focused on the same old story of the withdrawal of the Viet Minh troops. It was announced at the end that there would be no meeting on the 15th, and a restricted session on the Indochina issue will be held next Monday.

(3) In yesterday's meeting, Molotov took the initiative and proposed to let the commission of neutral nations supervise the armistice. His speech had a great impact on the meeting and was believed to have carried the meeting one step forward. Eden's visits to the Chinese and Soviet delegations and the agreement on holding a restricted session on the Indochina issue were also regarded as real progress. Thus the general discussion of the last three weeks finished. Discussions on substantial problems will start next week.

(4) The Chinese and Soviet delegations exchanged opinions on the Indochina issue after the meeting. We also decided to prepare to discuss on the 15th and 16th the commonalities and differences in both sides' plans. We will also discuss what part can be agreed to and what part should be held or worked on. I will report the result after the discussions.

(5) After the meeting between the Soviet, Korean, and Chinese delegations, we concluded that the current situation on the Korean issue is this: it will come to a deadlock if our counterparts cannot make new proposals except to emphasize repeatedly elections based on the distribution of populations under the supervision of the United Nations, and the withdrawal of the United Nations forces after achieving peace and security in Korea. As the next steps, we plan to make a compromise on the international supervision of elections. We will agree to let neutral nations supervise the elections, but not the United Nations. In addition, we will also emphasize two things: first, although we agree to let the neutral nations supervise the elections, these must be held after the withdrawal of foreign troops. Second, the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission [NNSC] should be organized to supervise the elections and to prevent interference by domestic terror groups only after the all-Korean commission, in which both Koreas consult as equals, drafts an election law. This compromise can carry the meeting one step forward. However, we presume that our counterparts will make no concessions on the issue of equal rights. We plan to let the Chinese delegation propose this compromise. We would like to request the Central Committee's instructions on whether or not to raise the issue of the neutral nations supervising the Korean elections and also on how to raise this issue.

Zhou Enlai
15 May 1954