

May 21, 1965
**Zhou Enlai's Speech at the War Planning Meeting of
the Central Military Commission**

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Summary:

Zhou Enlai's Speech at the War Planning Meeting discussing China's atomic testing

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Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

Zhou Enlai's Speech at the War-Planning Meeting of the Central Military Commission, 21 May 1965

The current international situation—particularly the national, democratic, and revolutionary movements in Asia, Africa, and Latin America—is a developing one. Take a look at Asia, Africa, and Latin America. There are incidents everywhere and all of them are the direct results of American imperialism. The United States has created all these problems, causing many of its allies and friends to break away. [Ed. Note: Within the past month, the United States had sent Marines to suppress what it called a communist revolt in the Dominican Republic, arousing heavy international criticism.] The atomic test we have just conducted is the best proof. We decided this year to explode the second atomic bomb. Because the bomb would be air dropped, we decided to carry out the test between April and May. The test could not be done too early. It had to be done between April and May. We chose May. Are we going to encounter more opposition this time than we did last year? Just the opposite. It was a test for us when we set the time during the Afro-Asian Solidarity Conference. The Chairman [Mao Zedong] made the decision to press ahead with the explosion in anticipation of condemnation. Of course, the specific date of explosion was left for the Special Committee² to decide. The front command made decisions on specifics, and in the rear I discussed [broader issues] with Luo Ruiqing.³ Politically, this was the moment when the Afro-Asian Solidarity Conference met in Ghana. There is a historical lesson, that is, at the time of the First Non-Aligned Meeting in Yugoslavia in [autumn] 1961, Khrushchev wanted to test a big atomic bomb in order to show off, to intimidate and frighten people, but he triggered opposition from all over the world. Delegations were sent to the United States and the Soviet Union to appeal for a suspension of the test. Last year, before we exploded our bomb, India asked China not to conduct the nuclear test. But India obtained only two votes and its proposal did not pass. We went ahead with our explosion. Last year, we selected the time of explosion after the Second Non-Aligned Meeting. This time we chose to test before the Second Afro-Asian Conference. We did consider the issue of possible reactions when the Afro-Asian Solidarity Meeting was in session. Maybe the situation has changed this time. At the Afro-Asian Solidarity Meeting, we met a lot of people, who in public expressed regret and advised us to stop testing. But in private they congratulated us. This shows that nationalism has two sides. On the one hand, because nationalist countries oppose imperialism, they support us. Our possession of the nuclear bomb has not only encouraged them but also strengthened their power. On the other hand, pressured by imperialism, induced by the Soviet Union, and influenced by the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty [signed by the United States and Soviet Union in the summer of 1963], they expressed regret. Wherever we went, we came across such mixed feelings. But this time we did not expect that so many people would hail our test. This year, only the United States showed little reaction because it wanted to downplay our role. Although it did not respond in public, it was actually worried at heart. This time, the people of the world, including the Japanese people, hailed and congratulated us, and expressed happiness. I have also conducted a survey: when we were carrying out the nuclear test, two entertainment groups from Japan were in China. Because Japan has been attacked by two atomic bombs and has suffered, it opposes nuclear tests. The members of the two groups were middle-of-the-roaders. Some were to the left of the middle and others to the right of the middle. I had two conversations with them. I said: "When we possess atomic bombs, it means that the Japanese also possess them. We all oppose nuclear bombs. You have been hit by two atomic bombs and you have made contributions to the whole world, because everybody in the world now opposes nuclear war. Without the sacrifice caused by those two atomic bombs, how could international attention be focused? Without the harm done by poisonous gas, how could people come to oppose gas warfare? There is always a price to pay." Chairman Mao has also said that when a heavy price had been paid, people would not dare to use such weapons again. At the moment, there is the atomic bomb [in China's possession]. In the future, there will be the hydrogen bomb as well as long-distance missiles. The United States may employ tactical nuclear weapons in Vietnam. It may use such weapons against China later. As Chinese we must be confident that no matter how many people will die in a nuclear war in the future, we will win world peace eventually. Just as Chairman Mao has pointed out, we will win peace, and win the victory of anti-imperialist war. If the United States attacks us, it will mean the coming of the time to eliminate nuclear war once and for all. That is because, when the United States drops a nuclear bomb on us and causes damage to part of China, it will alienate the people of the world, including

the American people. If the Soviet Union refuses to intervene in such a situation, then it is taking the first step in the direction of sitting on the top of a mountain to watch tigers fight. In that case, the American people need to consider the consequences and so do the Japanese people. When the atomic bomb is shot over their heads toward us, the Japanese will suffer more damages than we will. Japan has a population of one hundred million concentrated on several large islands. It has many industries. At present, Japan is doing the opposite of what we are doing: instead of building an underground railway, it is constructing a railway above ground from Tokyo to Osaka. We can not do that. If we do that, we do not know how much damage we will incur when nuclear war comes. Therefore, we must be prepared to pay a price to win international sympathy and support. As to those visitors from the Japanese entertainment world, most of them are afraid of war. After my talks with them, they felt that they had confidence when they stood beside China. One of them revealed his true feeling. He said that "I was unhappy when I first learned about your test. After hearing your talk, I have come to believe that we should hail your test. We should stand together." This shows that people's minds can be changed. From this perspective, our current prestige in the world has risen. At present, the Soviet Union is also deliberately underestimating us. In reality, it is afraid of us. At the moment, the United States is afraid of us and so is Britain. France also feels that it is lagging behind. It realizes that it has not developed the manufacturing technique that we have now. Although France has been engaged in its nuclear program for many years, it has only tested a few devices and it can not air drop the atomic bomb. Its uranium-235 factory will not be put into production until 1969. For this reason, the United States has decided to fight a large war and the Soviet Union will participate. But it will take many steps to reach that point. It is not a simple matter. We should be prepared for that eventuality. The more we are prepared, the more the enemy wants to retreat."