

December 19, 1965

Discussion between Zhou Enlai and Chen Yi

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Summary:

Zhou Enlai puts forward four points necessary for a strengthened Vietnamese and Chinese vantage point in negotiations with the United States.

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

ZHOU ENLAI AND NGUYEN DUY TRINH

Beijing, 10:30 a.m., 19 December 1965

Zhou Enlai: (1) We are not against the idea that when the war reaches a certain point negotiations will be needed. But, the problem is that the time is not ripe. (2) We agree that at present the military struggle is the main issue and should be coordinated with the political struggle. We also agree that in the political struggle, we should put forward our necessary conditions. But our conditions should be positive and from a high position. We should not put forth conditions which cause difficulties for ourselves, for our internal solidarity, and for the struggle. It means that we should not put forward unconditional cessation of bombing the North and cessation of violating North Vietnamese sovereignty and security as conditions. (3) We know that the North and the South are united as one, and we believe that the Vietnam Workers' Party is leading the whole Vietnamese nation in the anti-US resistance. But, when you put forward new conditions, the Vietnamese as well as the people of the world may think that you solve the issues of the North and the South in separate ways. Thus they cannot understand. (4) Vietnamese comrades consider that the US will not accept the new conditions. It's very dangerous to have such a way of thinking. So what will the situation be if they accept? If they do, we will be in a passive position, and this will have a negative impact on our struggle and on our solidarity. If we put forward tough conditions, they will not accept. But because your conditions are not tough, they may accept them. We sincerely hope that Vietnam's party and government would think further on this issue. Otherwise, you may fall into the trap set by the US imperialists, by the modern revisionists and their followers.^[1]

Chen Yi: It will be good if you do not put forward the condition of cessation of bombing. The Four Points are enough. We think that the condition of cessation of bombing North Vietnam will make the matter more complicated. This is the point we disagree [with]. We suggest that you consider this issue further.

^[1] On 20 December 1965, Zhou Enlai told Tran Van Thanh, head of the NLF resident delegation in Beijing: "America's 'unconditional negotiation' proposal is in fact with conditions, that is, the people in South Vietnam should lay down their weapons and stop their resistance activities, and the people in North Vietnam should give up the support to their compatriots in the South. The United States, which has now become deeply bogged down in the quagmire of the Vietnam War, is hatching a plot to expand the war, and it is possible that it would bring the war of aggression to all of Indochina, or even to China. The Chinese people are prepared. If the United States stubbornly insists on going along the path of expanding the war and thus runs into another encounter with the Chinese people, the Chinese people will face it and accept it, and will fight the war until the end."