

June 3, 1954

Telegram From Zhou Enlai to Mao Zedong and Liu Shaoqi, on the Issue of the US Asking China to Release Convicted US Nationals in China

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Summary:

Zhou Enlai gave a brief overview of the situation, in which he pointed out that there seemed to be disagreements between the US delegation in Geneva and the State Department over whether to talk directly with the PRC delegation. Zhou outlined what the PRC should do if either case materialized.

Credits:

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

Regarding the US request that our side releases the convicted and imprisoned US nationals in China, the US has been probing our attitude through news media. On 19 May, the US asked the UK to take up the matter with us. On 22 May, [Head of the Geneva Conference Delegation Walter B.] Smith touched on the issue in his conversation with [Soviet Foreign Minister and Head of the Soviet Delegation Vyacheslav] Molotov, admitting that some aspects of US policy toward China are impractical. The US press and newspapers reported on this from 20 May to 24 May. On 26 May, the spokesman of our delegation refuted the US allegations at a news conference, raising the issue of US detention of Chinese students, and orally expressing the view that the US and China should come into direct contact over this issue. On 27 May, we replied to the UK that China and the US could come into direct contact via the introduction of the UK. Since then, the US side has informed the U.K. that it agrees to direct talks, but there has been no further development. According to the Associated Press, this was because the US government was against its delegation's having direct contact with us. According to Trevelyan, the British negotiation representative, "the US delegation to the Geneva Conference is still interested in direct talks with China via the UK's introduction, but the delegation is waiting for instructions from the State Department." It thus could be inferred that the US delegation disagrees with the State Department on this issue. We plan to wait for a short while. If the US comes to talk [with us], we will contact them as originally planned and decide where to hold negotiations accordingly. During the negotiations, we would first of all mention the detention of Chinese students in the US and distinguish the convicted US nationals from other Americans [in China]. If the US is indeed unwilling to come into contact with us, we would issue a statement, elaborating our consistent policy of punishing US nationals with criminal offenses and protecting the law-abiding US nationals. Meanwhile, we would expose and refute the unjustifiable US action of detaining our students. Hereby is the report and please give instructions.

Zhou Enlai
3 June 1954