

August 6, 1964

**Memorandum of Conversation from the Meeting
between Premier Zhou Enlai and the Algerian
Ambassador to China Mohamed Yala**

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Summary:

Zhou Enlai and Mohamed Yala exchange views on the situation in Vietnam and across Africa, while discussing the Second Asian-African Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement

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Memorandum of Conversation from the Meeting between Premier Zhou Enlai and the Algerian Ambassador to China Mohammed Yala

1. The situation of Indochina
2. Aiding the struggle of liberation of the African people through Algeria
3. Questions of the Second Asian-African Conference
4. Invitation for a delegation from the party to visit Algeria

Time: 6 August 1964, 5:00pm - 6:45pm

Location: Xihua Hall

Delegates: Protocol Department Deputy Minister Ma Zhenwu, Asia-Africa Department Deputy Minister Xie Feng

Translator: Huang Jinqi

Recorder: Zhang Zhouyang

Premier Zhou: We've met before, correct?

Yala: We have met before in Conakry.

Zhou: Correct. Yesterday I had pressing matters to attend to and therefore was unable to meet with you as promised, so I sent Minister Ma [Zhenwu] to meet you. My apologies.

Yala: I should thank you for you still meeting with me despite being so busy, particularly with all that is going on in Vietnam. The Chinese Foreign Ministry has already reported the matter to me. I believe that Algeria is extremely concerned with the situation in Vietnam. I know through communication through Xinhua News that my country's government and people all support the Vietnamese in their struggle. I am currently unable to communicate directly with Algeria.

Zhou: The relationship between your two countries is even closer, since you were once colonized under the same country. You have supported each other in your struggle for independence.

Have you met with the Chinese ambassador stationed in Vietnam?

Yala: I have. I met with him yesterday and we spoke for a long time.

Zhou: So he has probably already told you of Vietnam's situation.

Yala: Yes.

Zhou: The Cambodian ambassador also returned recently. When he returns home I am entrusting him with passing on some of our opinions to Prince Sihanouk.

The topics on which I spoke with the Cambodian ambassador and asked him to pass on our opinions include: the Second Asia-Africa Conference, the Geneva Congress of 14 Countries, opposing the military provocations of imperialist America and its flunkies in Southeast Asia, the spreading of war, and opposing the interference of the United Nations in Indochina. Because of previous events, the United Nations has dispatched an inspection unit to the South Vietnam-Cambodia border. At the time, Prince Sihanouk welcomed the inspection units, but Indochina affairs are not under the jurisdiction of the United Nations, rather that of the 1954 and 1961-1962 Geneva Conventions. The inspection unit gave a favorable evaluation at Phnom Penh, but upon arriving in Saigon was influenced by America to give an evaluation that was unfavorable to Cambodia. Sihanouk became angry, declaring that the United Nations inspection team is untrustworthy and that he will not allow the United Nations to do such inspections again.

For similar reasons, Prince Sihanouk also opposes the suggestions of the Soviet Union to create a United Nations Peace Army, saying that this is in essence interference in the affairs of sovereign nations.

This is related to Cambodia which is also an important nation in Indochina.

Currently, we are primarily concerned with the problem in Vietnam, secondarily with that in Laos. This time, after making excuses on 4 August, America bombed Vietnam on 5 August with over 60 planes in an act of open armed aggression. This event has shaken the world. The People's Army of Vietnam, in order to protect their sacred places, returned fire and downed five planes, also taking a pilot hostage.

Why has America made these excuses and engaged in open armed aggression in the face of the world? They certainly have a motive. A few days prior, the American Navy released cannon fire on offshore islands along the coast of Vietnam and bombed the area around the Vietnam-Laos border. However, America denies having done so. On 2 August, the American Navy invaded Vietnamese waters, at which point the Vietnamese military engaged in a few skirmishes in self-defense. At the time no further action was taken. America did not show remorse, rather it began further planning. On 4 August, they lied, and the incident began on 5 August. America rallied boats from harbors in Hong Kong and Taiwan to gather in the Gulf of Tonkin. The Gulf of Tonkin is located between China and Vietnam and really is equivalent to a half-continental sea. America didn't send just one or two boats, but several. The said publicly that the move only involved two destroyers and two aircraft carriers, but in reality there are many more.

This is a probing exercise for America. One goal is to test the world's reaction, particularly that of China and Vietnam. It is also to strengthen the morale of its puppets in Vietnam and Laos. Another goal is for the President [Lyndon Johnson] to strengthen his political position in the election. The results may have some help in his campaign. America has convened a two party convention, and [Barry] Goldwater has expressed support for Johnson, but this is temporary. After a while, they will find another reason to argue. Increasing morale in Vietnam and Laos is like taking morphine. Once the high is gone, it's gone. America didn't bomb today, and so they did not get their high. At the same time, this has no effect on Laos. On 4 August, Laos had domestic problems of its own; a group attempting a coup arrested [Phoumi] Nosavan.

Internationally speaking, aside from Great Britain following America, other allied countries have expressed disapproval. Charles de Gaulle and, needless to say, West Germany and Japan oppose the move. Asian, African, and Latin American countries have all expressed dissatisfaction and even India is remorseful. The public opinion among the Asian, African, and Latin American nationalist countries is universally dis-satisfactory and this dissatisfaction will only continue to spread.

America will test the Vietnamese resolve to resist. Once tested, Vietnam will certainly resist. Actually, America already knows they will resist, and once they do test they will be even surer that if they set the flames of war, the fire will be inextinguishable. China will definitely stand by Vietnam. That is for certain.

America has also claimed that the war will not spread to the entirety of Vietnam, and there will not be a second Korean War. We do not provoke, but answer America's provocation. As America takes one step, the people of China follow in taking one step. Currently, America's actions are probing in nature. We can predict that the world's opposition will continue to strengthen. The American imperialists are not only a paper tiger, but are fearful of those strong enough to oppose them. They will take one step, and watch one step.

So, America has taken this step, and will immediately take this problem to be discussed at the United Nations. We will not agree to it being taken to the United Nations. I've already mentioned this. China, Vietnam, and even South Vietnam are not represented in the United Nations; this is a problem under the jurisdiction of the 14 Countries Conference. However, America has taken this problem to council, hoping for a political solution and does not dare to expand the war. We are not opposed to a political resolution, but we will invoke the Geneva Convention. A political resolution will require time, and will require us to bring America back to the negotiation table at Geneva. It looks as though we will be unable to do so before the American election. If we are to avoid further American aggression, we will have to be seriously prepared. If America wants to expand the war, we will certainly resist. This is the current situation, please inform the new ambassador.

Yala: I appreciate your detailed description of the situation in Vietnam. Your opinions are in agreement with our own. Algeria has a seat in the United Nations and completely supports China.

Zhou: Thank you for your opinion. Your party and government have been consistent in this policy.

Yala: We are very sympathetic to Vietnam. Vietnam is being split up, and in 1962 France also tried to partition Algeria. Even still, Algeria keeps running into imperialism, primarily the opposition and breaking of American imperialism. They have had huge profits in Sahara Petroleum and support a rebellion. America was also behind the Algerian-Moroccan conflict. Morocco's territorial claims were actually a sale with America. Morocco and America formed the North African Joint Stock Company in order to search for iron ore. The American-Hassan Joint Stock Company is headquartered in Geneva. Of course, this is not only a matter of profits, but one of politics and ideology. Just recently we expelled several American journalists. You could say that we have the same enemies and the same mission.

Zhou: Correct. America is both the last and the strongest imperialist nation in the world. If we are to expel them, Asia, Africa, and Latin America will have to fight for a long time. We must support one another in this struggle. We face this common enemy together.

If we all fight together, even though America seems potent, we can break them down and defeat them. Since America wishes to become the world hegemon, it must have a presence everywhere. Whether it is economic aggression, military bases, political intervention—everyone not in agreement will be overthrown, this is all inclusive cultural aggression.

America's influence is far-reaching. When Latin America isn't enough, they reach to

Asia; when Asia isn't enough, they reach to Africa; when Africa isn't enough, they reach to Western Europe, and will even "liberate" Eastern Europe. With its hand reached out so far, all ten fingers are spread wide, every kind of power—political, military, economic are all spread open. Even though America possesses an army, navy, and air force of over 3 million soldiers, spreading its power over the entire world will weaken it. Now, wherever problems arise, each of the over one thousand American military bases world-wide is nervous. The 50 or 60 billion Dollar American military budget becomes small when spread out of the whole world. They spend 600 million dollars each year in Vietnam alone. In these five or six years of aggression they have already spent 3.6 billion dollars.

It's the same politically. Interfering in other peoples' sovereignty and controlling their right to govern will offend everyone and make enemies everywhere. There still hasn't been a resolution to the current problem in Cuba, and the situation in Vietnam becomes more and more disgusting every day. Even now, America is making provocations in the Tokyo bay. They're bringing ships in from the Taiwan Strait, Philippines, and the Yokosuka base in Japan. If the entire world followed the example set by Cuba, Vietnam, Taiwan, Congo, and South Africa and rose up and fought back, what would America be able to do? America is still dealing with just one Cuba, a single Vietnam keeps America's leaders constantly busy, the Assistant Secretary of State has even arranged to go out with Johnson to be ambassador and vice-ambassador—this is the first time in the world that there has been a vice-ambassador, correct? If there were ten Cubas in the world or ten Vietnams, what could they do? Congo currently is exactly a third Cuba.

Your leader did very well by first and foremost refusing to acknowledge Tshombe at the South African Summit. It was correct to raise this flag. As a result, a lot of countries stood up against Tshombe, building momentum. That was not easy, because North, West, and East Africa were all indecisive. With Ben Bella as the first advocate, the rest will have a hard time opposing. This negated the legality of Tshombe's position, supported the armed struggle of the Congolese people, and established Lumumba's position as the rightful head of the Congolese Liberation Committee.

If there were just a few more Congos in Africa, a few more Vietnams in Asia, a few more Cubas in Latin America, then America would have to spread 10 fingers to 10 different places, spreading its power very thin. Today's Congo is like Algeria was in the past. They passed down their armed struggle from the Arab world to that of Black Africa. As far as we're concerned, that is the key. If we make America extend its 10 fingers to 10 different places, then we can chop them off one by one. This way America's military won't be able to function. If their fingers become two fists, then things will become difficult. But if we make them spread now, we can chop them off one by one. America doesn't dare pull back, as soon as they pull back they will lose. Some people in America say that they cannot lose Vietnam, that as soon as they lose Vietnam they will lose the entirety of East Asia, and eventually Africa and Latin America. Like I just said, their hand stretches far, but they don't dare pull it back. This is an irreconcilable problem with imperialism.

We're different, we rely primarily on ourselves. We support others in becoming self-reliant. We support Algeria, but Algeria will not be successful until it is entirely self-reliant. Algeria forced France to pull out 800,000 troops and 1,000,000 immigrants. If the Congolese people are not able to engage in armed struggle, then the United Nations army will suppress them. If the over 10,000,000 South Vietnamese people are not allowed to rise up in armed struggle, then they will also be suppressed. Even though we support them, the basic principle is for them to rely on themselves. We just support them, sympathize with them. But Imperialists don't believe in the native people, they exploit, suppress, and destroy the people. And so, imperialism must change. Just as Fidel Castro said, Cuba must win, America must lose.

Yala: Your evaluation of imperialism is entirely correct. The difference between us and the imperialists, particularly Americans, is that the people do not support them.

Zhou: Completely correct.

Yala: Because of this, just as you said, we are confident in victory. Of course the Imperialists are not without means, they still have the allied nations, but they are less and less willing to use their military.

Zhou: They still have puppets.

Yala: Their puppets are also diminishing.

When I participated in the first South African Summit held in Addis Ababa, the Foreign Affairs Ministers' Conference in Dakar, and the recent Second African Summit in Cairo, I saw that the American puppets are becoming fewer and fewer in number. Some of the countries that were denouncing America and France a year before still are. They're afraid that if they don't, they will be labeled traitors to Africa. For example, at the Dakar conference in August of last year, we wanted to pass a resolution denouncing America and France, but the 14 French Dependency Community nations didn't dare, they only wrote a general denunciation of colonialism. Things were different this year in Cairo. Even though some heads of state approve of Tshombe, once they arrived in Cairo and saw the kind of atmosphere there, they didn't dare, even though in reality they are a part of Tshombe's scheme.

Zhou: Right. You did well. You did two things very well at the conference. First, you opposed Tshombe, and second you took on the huge responsibility of being the host country for the Asia-Africa Conference.

Yala: But we have friends. China, for example, has already responded by giving us material support. I think we will be very well prepared.

Zhou: Good.

Yala: In regards to what you were saying earlier, the Algerian Foreign Minister ran into Prince Sihanouk in Paris. He was originally going to visit Algeria on 8 July, but circumstances changed and the situation in Cambodia forced him to return without visiting Algeria. But, in principle, he will still come to Algeria in the future. I know that Sihanouk will participate in China's National Day on 1 October. Supposedly, Sihanouk will visit Algeria after coming to China. I hope that President Ben Bella will be able to be here on 1 October as well, but I can't promise it. I know that the Chinese ambassador has already met with President Ben Bella, but I don't know what they've decided.

Zhou: Right. The question now is when will the Non-Aligned Movement hold a conference?

Xie Feng: The beginning of October.

Zhou: It would be better if the conference of the Non-Aligned Movement could be postponed a little.

Yala: The primary problem is that the Arab Summit is to be held in September, which would make it difficult for some leaders to attend, so the Non-Aligned Movement

conference won't begin until October. The heads of state need a month to make visits to China, Vietnam, and North Korea.

Do you know what other countries' attitudes toward the Second Asia-Africa Conference are?

Zhou: The countries we're in contact with are all generally okay. The resolution passed in Cairo to hold the Asia-Africa Conference in Algeria is equivalent to supporting the conference. Some people say that among the African countries, more will attend the Asia-Africa Conference than will attend the Non-Aligned Movement conference. Even more so in Asia. There are a lot of allied states in Asia, so they cannot attend the Non-Aligned Movement conference, but they are willing to attend the Second Asia-Africa Conference.

Yala: Correct, we are not emphatic attendees of the Non-Aligned Movement conference. We attend the conference in order to keep it from moving in a different direction—which it currently looks like it might do. What is the Non-Aligned Movement actually thinking? It's hard to say. Being non-aligned is partially not participating in a group and partially not assuming any obligations. In reality, we really are allied and have assumed obligations.

Zhou: I've met with a lot of heads of state in Africa, and they say the same; it's hard to say what the meaning of "non-alignment" really is.

Yala: Correct. Especially my own country, we fight against imperialism and colonialism, both of which come with obligations. It's not the same as countries like Dahomey [Benin], but they also have obligations. Their responsibility is toward France and the North Atlantic Ocean.

Our attendance of the Non-Aligned Movement Conference is because African and Arab countries attend, it is so that we can prevent the conference from going in another direction. The real conference is the Asia-Africa Conference, these are the countries that have common goals.

Zhou: Including political and economic aspects.

Yala: Right. They are in similar stages of development and face similar problems, they need to effectively exchange ideas. The so-called Non-Aligned Movement doesn't assume any obligations, they are brought together only by the fact that they are not allied. After the Non-Aligned Movement Conference, some countries will still have good relationships with France and America.

I attended the Non-Aligned Movement Conference in Belgrade. After the conference, I couldn't see that it had any use, so I didn't bring it up again. I've only brought it up now because of the next conference. I've never consulted with the nations from the conference, nor have we cooperated in solving any problems. But the Asia-Africa Conference is different, we've established relationships. For example, when we held the Asia-Africa Economic Conference preparatory meeting in Geneva, even though there were no concrete results, we still made contact.

Zhou: It was very useful for speeding things along. The next step is to begin solidifying things both politically and economically.

Yala: Correct, there are some problems that we need to discuss more concretely.

It was also very useful that you participated in the Geneva Economic Conference.

Zhou: The Bandung Conference was useful politically, raising ten points for moving Asian independence forward. The next step is to start solidifying things politically, economically, and militarily.

Yala: We are thinking about this and offer some suggestions. For example, we want to create a permanent and frequent [conference] structure. This may be in line with your thinking, to frequently raise the Asian-African torch high.

Zhou: Right, this is very important. The African Summit last year produced a permanent structure. Since the Asia-Africa Conference has been in place for ten years, it is that much more important to establish a permanent structure and frequently give it momentum.

Yala: I think that establishing a permanent structure will be easy since the African Organization also has one.

Zhou: Correct, We can frequently research the problems of the Asia-Africa Conference.

Now that you have accepted the role of host nation, we have the responsibility to offer material aid. Foreign Minister Chen Yi will return to the capital on the 10th and can discuss the matter with you then. Our ambassador in Algeria can also enter into discussion and offer unilateral assistance.

I want to speak with the ambassador about how we can help our African brothers in their struggle. Because Algeria has personal experience with armed resistance, you are sympathetic with the peoples' struggles in Congo, Central Africa, and South Africa etc. We understand this clearly. Algeria has personal experience, and has become one of the important centers for support of peoples' armed struggles for liberation all over Africa. Not only do you help them, but they also look to you for salvation. Because you have close relationships with all of Africa: East, West, and South, it's easy to go through you. In regards to West Africa, your relationship with these countries is close, and now there is another Congo. Though the country is small, the people's armed struggle is intense. Brother Ben Bella is also very clear on this. You can make contact with Congo and Angola. East Africa is very active as it has Burundi and Tanganyika. Your relationship with these two countries is good, particularly with Burundi since it is also a French speaking country. These two countries are connected to Congo, Mozambique, Central Africa, and South Africa.

[one paragraph redacted]

Yala: Thank you very much. In regards to what you just spoke about concerning supporting people's liberation movements in Africa, how do we know which ones really are people's liberation movements? Although you could say that we have a good understanding of this, there is still some difficulty. For example, there are four Cameroon groups in Algeria. They have to get in line, we cannot support four at the same time. We have to choose the right one to support.

Zhou: There are several Angolan groups as well.

Yala: Correct.

It's the same with the Senegal People's Party. The original Secretary General,

Ma-tou-zhu-bu [sic], is a member of the French Communist Party. The original structure has been divided. Ma-tou-zhu-bu was in contact during the time of the Algerian War of Liberation. Afterward, he published a joint communique with Thorez, after which we have not had contact with him and he has not come to Algeria.

In his joint communique with Thorez, he says that the French Communist Party supported the Algerian people's struggle, that they had lent aid to the Algerian people. This is false.

Zhou: Certainly a lie.

We can speak more about this kind of problem. The Africa Department [of the Foreign Ministry] and researchers from the China-Africa Friendship Association can talk them over.

We are not only doing construction, but engaging in revolution.

Yala: Yes.

Zhou: There's another thing. In regards to the letter you brought for Chairman Mao [Zedong] from President Ben Bella, I am arranging for you to meet with him, whether it is at another location or in Beijing when he returns.

Yala: Thank you. This is something I've dreamed of frequently. This letter is from the Secretary General of the People's Liberation Army Front Party to the Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party. It is related to the two parties.

Our Secretary General not only wishes to host a group of representatives from the Chinese government, but would also like to receive a delegation from the party. Because the party in Algeria is lacking in experience, particularly in the matter of structuring the party, which we have only just begun to do.

The last time our Chinese comrades visited Algeria, they gave us many experiences, such as teaching how instigate mass movements. The Algerian party was originally a military group, and still does not have a foundation in ideology.

We have also invited the Guinea Party to come to Algeria and teach us to build our party. Algeria needs to learn from the experiences of Guinea, and also holds China's delegations in very high regard.

Zhou: Right, we've spoken of this before. The Algerian Party Central Authorities and Financial Administration Committee head Ri-la-bo [sic] came before beginning your National Representative Conference. We invite you to send delegations as well. If you could send representatives from the party, we would be happy.

I will report your question to the Central Authorities.

I am honored. During my visit, I responded to Brother Ben Bella's invitation to speak with my African brothers in the struggle at the People's Liberation Front Cadre Meeting, but the report was made hastily and I was only able to provide consultation. It was the first time I've made this kind of report, and I was very happy to do it. In the future, we can send more delegations, make more frequent contact and exchange experiences.

Yala: Correct. We know that you are also one of the heads of the Chinese Party, so when you gave your report, every member of the People's Liberation Front Cadre came to listen.

Our Secretary General and President wish to invite a delegation from the Chinese Party to come to Algeria for a relatively extended visit to the countryside to speak with local organizations and the masses.

Zhou: Right, we will exchange experiences. I will report this matter to the Central Authorities.