

June 22, 1965

**Minutes of the First Meeting between Premier Zhou
Enlai and President Nasser**

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Summary:

Zhou Enlai and Gamal Abdel Nasser discuss developments in Algeria and the fate of the Second Asian-African Conference.

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Summary of First Conversation between Premier Zhou Enlai and President Nasser
(Premier has not reviewed)

Time: 11 a.m., 22 June 1965

Place: President's residence, Cairo

Summary

1. Nasser spoke of Algeria's 19 June incident.

(1) The problem is not with an individual but relations between countries;

(2) The incident cannot be due to foreign influence;

(3) He gave the background to the conflict that erupted between Ben Bella and Boumedienne;

(4) He said that the major objective of Amer's going to Algeria is to guarantee the safety of Ben Bella.

2. Regarding the issue of whether or not the Asian-African Conference will be held, both sides agree not to take a position before consulting with the Algerian side and other countries.

Nasser: We are prepared to send Amer to Algeria, talk with them, and understand the situation. They welcome it. Through our ambassador, they have already asked that we support them and understand our position on the Second Asian-African Conference.

My response to them is: the problem is not one person, but relations between countries. To them I say that my view is that, with the international situation at hand, we are shocked regarding this incident, which will affect Algeria's prestige. Moreover, it has happened before such a major international conference. I have also asked that they guarantee the safety of Ben Bella. They now face huge difficulties. I proposed to them sending Amer there to discuss all the problems with them. They welcome the proposal.

We know all their secrets. They mainly are divided into two groups: one is headed by Ben Bella, the other by Boumedienne. Each is suspicious of the other. Each side wants to do away with the other. This controversy has long existed. We previously asked about this, engaging in long talks with Ben Bella and Boumedienne. I hope that they can reconcile. At the same time, all the hostile forces have thought of every means by which to widen their differences. Two months ago, I also told Boumedienne: If you take action you will win, but the result will be the weakening of Algeria, and there will follow a series of coups d'etat. My view regarding Boumedienne and Bouteflika is that they are both nationalists. This incident cannot be due to foreign influence. We think that this is the result of the conflict between them. We think that Bouteflika is a good person, but he is Boumedienne's man, so Ben Bella is going to get rid of him. We think that this is Ben Bella's error. We told Ben Bella, you need to unite everybody, do not split them apart, but he does not listen. He has insisted on getting rid of Boumedienne's people one by one. Another point is that Ben Bella wants to weaken or even destroy the military. This simply helped Boumedienne have the military take his side. Ben Bella decided to establish a militia, with himself as its

leader, without regard to the party and in opposition to the military. We told Ben Bella that this was an error. Having two militaries in one country will bring about disaster.

Premier Zhou: Ben Bella recently set free some anti-government elements. Is this or not also a controversy between them?

Nasser: The released persons in fact are enemies of Boumedienne.

The problem now is, what do we do about the Asian-African Conference?

Premier Zhou: Your Excellency thinks that this incident is entirely one of domestic politics and that there are no external factors. We, as their friends, all hope that they unite. On the basis of their present domestic situation, can the situation possibly stabilize!

Nasser: It can. It has stabilized. Looking at this incident, I see that Boumedienne has succeeded. They are now opposed to Ben Bella and also have religious connections. You know that in the war of liberation their philosophy was Islam, not democracy.

Our goal now in sending Amer is to guarantee the life and safety of Ben Bella. They naturally have two ideas regarding Ben Bella. The first is to kill him at the time of the coup d'etat. The second is to turn him over to a military tribunal for trial. They are now choosing the first way. During the coup d'etat, not one military man was arrested. As the coup d'etat was launched, Ben Bella gave an order, telling his bodyguards not to resist. As a result, they took Ben Bella to a jeep and drove him to a naval base near Algiers. Their party's strength is not strong, as Ben Bella drove out the leading cadres one by one from the party. Ben Bella later drove out all those loyal to Khider. Khider is now in Morocco. The conflict between Ben Bella and Khider is a problem with regard to socialism. Khider is against socialism. As for such others as Ahmed, Abbas, Benkhedda, and Belkacem, they are less the enemies of Ben Bella than they are of Boumedienne. In 1962, Ben Bella helped Boumedienne knock them down. We are quite familiar with these people. When Ben Bella first went to Oran, we supported him, sending him three shiploads of weapons. At that time, there were such men as Ben Bella, Boumedienne, Khider, and Bitat. Between them are differences in ideology, but also a source is the fighting over power. Algeria's original chief of the general staff was executed. Ben Bella then sent Zbir to serve as chief of staff. Zbir was originally against Boumedienne and supported Ben Bella who, in a situation of disagreement with Boumedienne, appointed Zbir. But this time Zbir supported Boumedienne. In order to understand this matter, it is necessary to be aware of the historical background. We are quite familiar with these people. Bouteflika has great influence in the military. Boumedienne's influence is also great. At the time of the war of resistance, he was active along the Tunisian border.

The problem now is what to do about the Asian-African Conference. Yesterday, they were a bit hesitant on whether or not to hold it as scheduled but, after consulting yesterday evening with some Asian and African countries, including China, today they announced that they were prepared to hold the conference as scheduled.

Premier Zhou: They summoned our ambassador. We also understand that this incident is mainly of domestic origin.

In regard to the Asian-African Conference, there is the issue of requesting U Thant. Your Excellency will remember that we are resolutely opposed. In the last two days, as we see from reports from foreign news agencies, the Algerian government is prepared to invite U Thant as a guest of the Algerian government to participate in the opening ceremony. If so, then the issue will be solved, as he then has nothing to do with the Asian-African Conference.

Nasser: The main problem now is whether or not to hold the conference. I think it would be difficult to postpone the conference to another date. If we do not hold it now, it would be difficult to re-set the date.

Premier Zhou: This time they summoned our ambassador, asked that China not interfere with our internal affairs, asked that China support them, and asked to understand China's position regarding the Asian-African Conference. In regard to the first issue, the ambassador immediately answered that China never interferes in the internal affairs of other countries. As for the other issues, he would have to consult Beijing.

Nasser: Algeria of course should set a good example for other countries. So we were shocked regarding this incident. The important thing now is not to have a new coup d'état, or Algeria will collapse. They face many enemies, such as Bourguiba, Hassan, France, and the United States. The United States is happy regarding this incident. The United States would welcome any change in regard to Algeria, because this would weaken Algeria, although Washington is aware that Boumedienne is a terrible person and uncompromising. We cannot imagine that this incident has any external interference whatsoever. But Ben Bella's safety is a problem. We must intervene. Our relationship with them is like that of brothers. Therefore, we do not see every matter as a domestic political problem. They, too, have intervened in some of our affairs. We see Ben Bella's safety as a humanitarian issue. Throughout the world, Ben Bella is known as a national hero. We do not agree with their now developing a campaign against Ben Bella, such as saying that Ben Bella is a traitor.

Premier Zhou: Regarding the issue of the Asian-African Conference, we also have to consider the matter and confer with our country's government and party center. But our basic thinking is that it should be held. We hope that before Your Excellency confers with many countries and not rush to take a position. To be like India in hurriedly taking a position would have a bad influence. Countries like the United Arab Republic (UAR), China, and Indonesia should go a bit deeper.

Nasser: I agree not to take a position before receiving Amer's report and conferring with other countries. But tomorrow I am afraid it will be necessary to make a decision.

Premier Zhou: If necessary, would it be possible for you to consider inviting Sukarno and Soebandrio to confer together?

Nasser: Yes.

Amer: It would be best to hold the conference as scheduled. If the three countries of the UAR, Indonesia, and China make the decision, it would offend other countries. Therefore, it is also necessary to conduct extensive consultations.

Premier Zhou: At present there is only an issue of holding the conference as scheduled. If Your Excellency finds it possible to hold it as scheduled, then we must promote holding the conference as scheduled.

(At the state banquet that evening, Nasser said that he originally wanted to go himself to Algiers, but that his colleagues would not agree, so he is sending Amer.□

[...] [ellipsis in original]

