

Letter from General Ely to Antoine Pinay on the Bandung Conference (Saigon, 28 April 1955)

Caption: On 28 April 1955, General Paul Ely, French Commissioner General in Indo-China, sends a letter to Antoine Pinay, French Foreign Minister, in which he gives his first impressions of the Bandung Conference, held from 18 to 24 April 1955.

Source: Ministère des Affaires étrangères; Commission de publication des DDF (sous la dir.). Documents diplomatiques français. Volume I: 1955, 1er janvier-30 juin. Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1987. 849 p. p. 531-532.

Copyright: (c) Translation CVCE.EU by UNI.LU

All rights of reproduction, of public communication, of adaptation, of distribution or of dissemination via Internet, internal network or any other means are strictly reserved in all countries.

Consult the legal notice and the terms and conditions of use regarding this site.

URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/letter_from_general_ely_to_antoine_pinay_on_the_bandung_conference_saigon_28_april_1955-en-f71582f5-0631-4bod-a1a9-4d7a75eeffdb.html



Last updated: 01/03/2017

Letter from General Ely to Antoine Pinay (Saigon, 28 April 1955)

T. No 284

Saigon, 28 April 1955, 1.10 p.m.
(Received on 30 April at 6 p.m.)

Mr Compain, who returned from Bandung this morning, will submit his report to me tomorrow. I shall send it to you as soon as I receive it.

I thought that this would be a good time to give you my initial impressions.

All the analysts maintain that the goal of Jawaharlal Nehru and Chou En-lai was to take advantage of the Conference to promote solidarity among Asian and African nations and to substitute their leadership for that of Western nations. Anti-colonialism was meant to be the rallying point for the 29 countries, whose political interests have, in the past, often been at odds.

That was why Chou En-lai decided to strike a conciliatory pose. However, after a few days of exhilaration, deep differences began to emerge when Sir John Kotelawala took an anti-Communist stance, supported by the Iraqi, Turkish, Pakistani and Filipino delegates and followed by the group of small nations. Moreover, Nehru, visibly edgy and confounded by Chou En-lai's prestige, lost his composure and was the target of sharp criticism from some delegations, even though relations between these two major powers have been rather cool. Still, they agreed to salvage the Conference, and the final communiqué was drafted in one go under their supervision, although the behind-the-scenes negotiations were led by India and China.

Then Nehru and U Nu gave reassurances to Cambodia and Laos, and Chou En-lai confirmed to Prince Sihanouk that China would respect the five principles and would not intervene in Cambodia's internal affairs. At the same time, Pham Van Dong told Katay Don Sasorith that the Pathet Lao affair was of concern only to the Laotian Government. Furthermore, Chou En-lai's appeal concerning the Formosa question was also designed to rally support for himself. In fact, the closest friends of the United States, and General Carlos Romulo in particular, felt that the response from the State Department came too quickly and was too peremptory. The Arab countries were united on the issues of North Africa and Palestine but were divided on general policy matters. Yemen, Saudi Arabia and Egypt were openly sympathetic towards the group advocating neutrality, while their neighbours came out in favour of an alliance with the West.

France came under fire from all sides. Both Djamali, the Iraqi delegate, and the representative of Ethiopia expressed the most virulent criticism towards France while, to everyone's surprise, Nasser displayed a measure of moderation. The representatives of Turkey and Iran, while recognising the legitimate aspirations of the peoples of North Africa, openly expressed understanding for our country.

The attitude of the associate states was disappointing. Only Prince Sihanouk took an honourable stance and spoke several times in our support, but Katay Don Sasorith was discourteously cool towards our Ambassador. The South Vietnamese delegation was also very aloof and stood by while General Trinh Minh The circulated an insulting paper lampooning the attitude of the French colonialists in Cambodia. The delegation appeared to be unaware of the negotiations involving its own country and refused to attend a meeting with the Viet Minh delegation that had been tactfully arranged by Pandit Nehru.

The delegation of the Democratic Republic of North Vietnam was more prudent. Pham Van Dong, in a conversation with Rous from the *Franc-Tireur* newspaper, merely deplored the prevailing anarchy in the south with only two months to go before the contacts set up under the Geneva Accords are to take place.

In short, while the final communiqué looks substantial, it makes a poor attempt at papering over the cracks that have appeared in relations among Asian nations. Nevertheless, no one doubts that the Bandung Conference will have far-reaching consequences, the most important of which are Chou En-lai's enhanced prestige, very slight feelings of solidarity among the Asian countries, of revenge on the Western countries

and, lastly, the general view that France is pursuing a colonialist policy in North Africa. The publication of the Agreement on Tunisia was met with disillusionment. Salah ben Youssef declared that it was no more than *a fake autonomy completely devoid of all reality*. However, the observations voiced on the meeting between President Edgar Faure and Habib Bourgiba were more sympathetic.