

Memorandum from the British Embassy in Djakarta on the Bandung Conference (Djakarta, 28 April 1955)

Caption: On 28 April 1955, the British Ambassador to Djakarta, Oscar Morland, sends a letter to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Harold Macmillan, in which he encloses a memorandum on the working and achievements of the Bandung Conference.

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Mr Hunt 601

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SOUTH-EAST ASIA (GENERAL)
May 4, 1955
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ACTION COPY

THE AFRO-ASIAN CONFERENCE AT BANDUNG

Mr. Morland to Mr. Macmillan. (Received May 4)

(No. 40. Confidential) Djakarta, April 28, 1955.

Sir,
With reference to my despatch No. 41 of 28 April, enclosing a copy of the final communiqué of the Asian-African Conference which took place at Bandung from 18 to 24 April, I have the honour to enclose a copy of an interesting memorandum giving first-hand impressions of the working and achievements of the conference, written by Mr. R. W. Parkes, Counsellor at this Embassy.

2. Mr. Parkes remained in Bandung during the whole of the conference, and was able, through his contacts with members of many of the delegations, both to supply background information on facts and the policies of Her Majesty's Government, and to obtain useful impressions of the objectives and attitudes of the Governments represented.

3. I agree with the conclusions summarised in paragraph 19 of Mr. Parkes' memorandum. I think that there is no doubt that the Prime Minister of China achieved most successfully the objects for which he came to Bandung. Everybody was favourably impressed with him personally, and his demonstration of sweet reasonableness had considerable effect on the representatives of all but the most resolutely anti-communist Governments. In particular the delegates of some of the distant Arab countries went home feeling that communist China might really have no aggressive intentions.

4. The tone of the discussions was remarkably free from anti-Western bias, and even the references to colonialism and the sufferings of so far unliberated territories were milder than they might have been. Moreover the conference did not take the opportunity afforded by the presence, in the corridors or in the committee rooms, of agitators from Cyprus, Sarawak, Malaya, and elsewhere to include hostile references to those territories in their final communiqué.

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5. The organisation of the conference succeeded beyond expectation. Though it was mainly due to the stiffening of the joint secretariat by experienced Indian officers, the Indonesians have rightly received praise for their determination and hard work to make Bandung attractive to the visitors. There was a good deal of window-dressing, but in addition real goodwill and anxiety to please, and nearly all the delegates and journalists to whom I have spoken since the end of the conference felt that the imperfections of food, accommodation, and organisation generally were outweighed by the friendly and co-operative treatment they received.

6. The conclusions reached on economic and cultural co-operation attracted little publicity, but they are comprehensive and mainly sound, and they provide a framework for the development of contacts and action among the participants which will be of value if the countries concerned show determination to follow them up.

7. As one of the handful of occidentals on the floor of the public opening session of the conference I was impressed by the evident feeling of the delegations that the meeting represented a fresh stage in international relations: nearly all had gone through the same experience of freeing themselves, or being freed, and at that moment their sense of common achievement was very strong.

8. As far as Indonesia is concerned the holding and the results of the conference have been entirely beneficial. She has suffered from a strong feeling of national inferiority, which has produced excessive nationalism and suspicion of foreign interference. Now she is much reassured: all the world knows of her and she can, and does, congratulate herself on a considerable achievement. I think there is reason to hope that the long period of national growing-up may be shortened as a result of the success of the conference.

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9. I am sending copies of this despatch to Her Majesty's Commissioner-General at Singapore; to the Governor-General of the Sudan; to Her Majesty's Ambassadors at Kabul, Rangoon, Pnom Penh, Peking, Cairo, Addis Ababa, Paris, Bagdad, Tokyo, Amman, Beirut, Monrovia, Katmandu, The Hague, Tel Aviv, Tehran, Manila, Jedda, Bangkok, Damascus, Ankara, Washington, and Saigon; to the United Kingdom Permanent Representative to the United Nations, New York; to Her Majesty's Ministers at Ventiane, Tripoli and Taiz; and to the United Kingdom High Commissioners at Colombo, New Delhi, Karachi, Ottawa, Canberra, Wellington, and Pretoria.

I have, &c.

O. C. MORLAND.

Enclosure

Some Impressions of the Bandung Conference

April 18-24

The value of impressions normally lies in their freshness. Yet the size and scope of the Asian-African Conference in Bandung, for which delegates assembled from twenty-nine countries and were joined by a swarm of journalists and "visitors," invited and uninvited, provided observers with so rich and plentiful a diet that a prolonged period of mental digestion is strongly indicated. I apologise in advance therefore if the haste with which the following impressions were assembled is all too apparent.

2. I have already transmitted such day-to-day details of the work of the Conference as I was able to gather. Secrecy was non-existent, thanks in the main to the numerous journalists included in many of the delegations; but physical, and even telephonic, contact with harassed and frequently belated delegates presented me with serious difficulties, and it was obviously undesirable to be conspicuous or importunate. By contrast the press was able to report developments in the closed sessions of the three committees with rapidity and comparative accuracy, and on balance I think the complete lack of secrecy was an advantage since the frankness, sincerity and responsibility with which many of these "closed" discussions were conducted merited publicity.

3. Briefly the 17 April and part of 18 April were devoted to procedure and the drawing up of an agenda. It had been the intention of the other four sponsoring Prime Ministers, notably Pandit Nehru, to keep the public aspects of the Conference as brief and uncontroversial as possible. But Mohammad Ali, whose arrival was somewhat delayed, had other ideas and it was finally decided that those Heads of Delegations who desired might make opening statements limited to fifteen minutes. In the event twenty-three Chief Delegates spoke, several of whom generously exceeded their allowance, and the first two days thus went in speechifying. This left five days only in which to cover an ambitious five-point agenda, issue a unanimous communiqué and make closing statements at another open session. The fact that this time-table was adhered to owed something to the imminence of Ramadhan but more to the skill of the Rapporteur, Prince Wan of Thailand, and the diligence of the many sub-committees that were perforce set up. The excessive number of the latter was generally attributed to the weakness and inexperience of the Conference's chairman, Dr. Ali Sastroamidjojo of Indonesia. Pandit Nehru sat by his side and did his best, but Dr. Ali was completely out of his depth and clutched at a sub-committee whenever drowning appeared imminent.

4. The first few speeches at the opening session were well-meaning but trite and it was left to Dr. Fadhel Jamali, the last speaker on the opening day, to shatter this unnatural and rather self-conscious restraint with a forthright attack on the new (communist) colonialism. Thereafter the interest in the speeches increased considerably and from the positions taken up by Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand and Turkey it was fairly obvious that the other side of the medal would also be displayed, and that the closed sessions of the all-important Political Committee would produce some fireworks. Chou En-Lai's opening statement, which was made towards the end of the second day, was conciliatory in the extreme. It was heard with breathless interest and received with considerable applause, although the palm had to be awarded to General Romulo for as brilliant and moving a speech as I have ever heard.

5. The inside history of the Conference is really all in the final communiqué, unanimity over which was only reached

after a certain amount of give and take and much closely argued reasoning. Items A "Economic Co-operation" and B "Cultural Co-operation" call for no particular comment. The delegates allotted to these two committees worked smoothly but inconspicuously and their proceedings attracted little interest. Items C, D, E and F were taken by the Political Committee, on which Chief Delegates sat assisted by varying numbers of advisers, in the order in which they appeared.

6. At the outset there was a good deal of rather woolly discussion about a definition of Human Rights before the Political Committee eventually fell back on the United Nations Charter and Declaration. Here Chou En-Lai made a good propaganda point by asking for an adjournment to study this document, issued by an Organisation of which he was not a member. Condemnation of racialism in South Africa and elsewhere was emotional, emphatic and effortless, though General Romulo was mainly responsible for the good sense contained in the last sentence of Section (2).

7. Item D, "Problems of Dependent Peoples," was chiefly remarkable for a wrangle over whether or not a reference should be made in Section (1) to communist colonialism. This was in effect precipitated by Sir John Kotelawala's outspoken remarks, both to the press and later to the Political Committee, on the subject of communist subversive activities and expansionism. When the session of April 21 ended Sir John intemperately brushed aside remonstrances from Chou En-Lai and Pandit Nehru; and the latter, as also Krishna Menon, was so put out that they could barely bring themselves to speak to anyone at a party I attended later in the evening.

8. This gave Turkey and Iraq their cue and they lobbied feverishly into the small hours to whip up support for a condemnation of the new colonialism to balance that of the more familiar Western variety. Iran agreed to co-sponsor such a proposal at 1 a.m., Pakistan at 2 a.m. and by the time the next session began their ranks had been swelled by Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, the Philippines and the Sudan; whilst Cambodia, Ceylon (with some reluctance!), Gold Coast, Ethiopia, Japan, Jordan, Laos, Thailand, South Vietnam and—somewhat later—Egypt promised support. This despite a somewhat incoherent and undignified recantation and apology by

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Sir John Kotelawala for which the nocturnal persuasions of India, Burma and Indonesia were apparently responsible. The anti-communist tally was thus nineteen, a clear majority, and under Turkish leadership prospects of compromise looked poor. The alternative thus appeared to be either to omit all reference to colonialism or to record disagreement on this point in an otherwise unanimous document. In the event however a formula, "colonialism *in all its manifestations*," was devised by Krishna Menon and sold to the drafting committee by Colonel Nasser, who was summoned from his herculean task as chairman of a similar committee on the principles of peaceful co-existence for this express purpose—a tribute to his prowess in committee. This phraseology was subsequently underlined by Iraq, Pakistan and Turkey in their concluding statements which, mainly on account of this dog fight, were delayed by some three hours whilst tension steadily mounted, and lasted until 9.30 p.m.

9. Section (2), dealing with North Africa, was mainly an Arab affair. Only Turkey was seriously opposed to it and Chou En-Lai conspicuously added his support. "Invited visitors" from all three territories attended both open and closed sessions (thereby bringing the official numbering to thirty-two) and must have been highly gratified by their success both here and in Section (2) of Item B. It is regrettable, but probably inevitable, that Algeria was included, and few if any outside the Turkish Delegation appeared to give a thought to the potential embarrassment thereby resulting to France in particular and the N.A.T.O. powers in general.

10. Item E, "Other Problems," comprises the Palestine, Western New Guinea and Yemen resolutions. The first was a foregone conclusion despite level-headed and reasonable opposition from U Nu, behind whom Pandit Nehru was judged to have conveniently sheltered (he did not speak). Similarly, after so much lavish and successful hospitality, Indonesia could not be denied her bread and butter present and the Turkish and Iranian Delegates, who at one time looked like opposing it, bowed to the inevitable. Chou En-Lai firmly supported both these recommendations. The Yemen resolution is unfortunate. Friendly delegations were fully aware of our arguments here but I gather it slipped through in the press of more urgent

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business. It was sponsored by the Saudi Arabian Delegation, who put in an eight-page memorandum. Haj Amin, who arrived a day late in order to claim full credit for the Palestine resolution, was tacked on to the Yemeni Delegation but did not apparently speak. Apart from its declaration of support the resolution is mildly worded. It need not, I suggest, be taken too tragically and probably represents general oriental lack of moral courage to refuse the otherwise tongue-tied and inept Yemenis their little consolation prize. Despite eager-beavering by Archbishop Makarios and M. Lembros, the Greek Minister in Ankara, enosis was not allowed to rear its ugly head. The former was also roughly handled by correspondents at his one press conference.

11. Item F, "Promotion of World Peace and Co-operation," was naturally the true focus of the Conference. For Section (1) the credit goes to the Secretary-General of the Pakistan Delegation, who made rings round his opponents, notable the Indonesian Delegate. Sections (2), and (3) up to the Ten Principles, presented no difficulty and were probably the most truly unanimous decisions of the entire Conference. Reading through the text I can see traces of Indian, Indonesian, Pakistani, Singhalese and even Chinese hands, but feeling here was deep, genuine and undivided.

12. Of the concluding Ten Principles far and away the most important are, I think, Principles 5 and 6 (a). Most delegations produced formulæ and even the Japanese, whose sole concern appeared to be trade, entered a two-point candidate (of which economic co-operation was not unnaturally one). The level of discussion here by delegates was very high indeed and on the evening of April 22 Pandit Nehru gave a brilliant ninety-minute exposition of Gandhian neutralism. He spoilt the effect, however, by thumping the table towards the end on the subject of defence pacts and castigating Pakistan and Iraq as lackeys of the West or some such derogatory phrase. Dr. Fadhel Jamali told me that night that he intended to reply next morning and point out that, however serviceable such a philosophy might be in the case of a country of the size and potential of India, it simply could not be applied to small nations which *had* to unite to defend themselves effectively.

13. This he duly did on the following day in an able speech of less than his usual length. Mohammad Ali then took up the

cudgels, notably on the right of self-defence, and was succeeded by Charles Malik, who was at his philosophical best. After cleverly, but tactfully, exposing the fundamental barrenness of Pandit Nehru's position, he asked what practical contribution the latter could make. Would he agree, for example, to organise a *bloc* of neutrals from Asia and Africa?

14. To this Pandit Nehru made no answer. Later, however, in an obviously genuine, if rather reluctant, speech, he apologised to Pakistan and Iraq and conceded the right of individual self-defence. He was still against defence pacts as such, which not only increased tension but were also degrading. Did anyone doubt that a solution in North Africa had been delayed by French appeals for N.A.T.O. support? At the same time he conceded again that, in the peculiar conditions of Europe, N.A.T.O. might be necessary. Going further he said, doubtless echoing Sir John Kotelawala quite unconsciously, that the operation of the Cominform and peaceful co-existence were incompatible. He was perceptibly shaken and unsure of himself, and there is no doubt that he was mortified at his failure to carry full conviction and give a decisive lead.

15. A drafting committee was then set up, of which Colonel Nasser was appointed chairman, to reduce the mass of principles and formulæ to their lowest common denominator. By the evening fourteen Principles survived, which dwindled to ten on the final day. The choice of Colonel Nasser appears to have been inspired since at the crucial stage his military bluntness and general committee sense were invaluable. On Principle 5 he pointed out that the right of self-defence had been conceded, and the necessity for collective defence amply demonstrated so far as small nations were concerned. Where then was the difficulty over this Principle? Its qualification by Principle 6 (a) was his own suggestion, and took much of the sting out of it for, e.g., Pandit Nehru and U Nu. I regard this clause as a really significant addition and one which can be used subsequently by us to much advantage. Incidentally the phrase "live together in peace with one another" is Chou En-Lai's contribution. He said that "peaceful co-existence" had acquired too many nuances and he wanted to get away from it.

16. There were twenty concluding statements, including one by the chairman, in which gratification on the unanimity

achieved, gratitude for the arrangements made by the Joint Conference Secretariat and a lively awareness of the historical milestone now passed were universally expressed. Pandit Nehru tried to impress in this his only public speech, but frequently lost the thread through sheer fatigue. He sent greetings to Europe, America and Australia and New Zealand. The last two were almost in the Asian-African area and should come nearer. They would be welcome. Asia and Africa were ready to co-operate with anyone but only as equals; and they would no longer be drawn into Europe's wars.

17. Chou En-Lai's statement was mainly remarkable for a repetition of his readiness to "sit down with America and negotiate to relax tension in Taiwan," which, however, he qualified this time by adding that this would not in any way prejudice the right of China to liberate Taiwan. This addition was generally attributed to the prompt and rather discouraging reaction of the State Department to his previous day's offer to negotiate, with which the Conference had not been unnaturally immensely pleased. Indeed this offer, more than anything else, had put the Conference on the map and its reasonableness seemed in tune with the spirit of Bandung. By contrast the tone and timing of the American statement were alike deplored by every delegate I met thereafter. Had it not appeared when it did I suspect that Chou En-Lai might have announced the release of the American airmen, like a flight of symbolic doves, in his closing speech. Nehru and others had been working on him hard on this point and the gesture would have cost him very little.

18. And so the first Asian-African Conference came to an end and weary delegates and observers stumbled across the road to a rather stale reception at which the hosts were the five sponsoring Prime Ministers. No one had the energy to stay for long and we gratefully took our leave with the minimum delay.

19. I would draw the following conclusions from this Conference, which I list in no attempted order of importance.

- (i) That the meeting of some 250 (my own reckoning) delegates was mutually educative, and that they not only gained considerably in general knowledge and understanding of each other but also in collective responsibility.
- (ii) That the Conference showed in marked degree a universal desire for peace, and in particular the avoidance of nuclear and thermo-nuclear warfare.
- (iii) That time and again delegates went out of their way to support, and defend, the United Nations Organisation; and showed a perceptible determination to make it work more effectively, though on lines less favourable to the big powers.
- (iv) That, although Chou En-Lai scored an outstanding success by his personality as much as by his consistent moderation and flexibility, he probably failed materially to lull the suspicions of any key nation.
- (v) That the setback suffered by Gandhian neutralism may well oblige Pandit Nehru to re-cast his cherished philosophy; and that the recognition of defence pacts amplified in Principle 5 read with 6 (a) could have far-reaching results; and finally,
- (vi) That, with the possible exceptions of Japan and Turkey on the outer periphery of the area represented at Bandung, the mixture that invariably titillated the palate of this heterogeneous oriental assembly was a nice blend of the philosophic and spiritual, to which had been added a sprinkling of salient facts and a strong flavouring of sincerity.

20. So far as (i) is concerned it was very clear that the Middle East Delegations and Turkey for example knew virtually nothing of the facts of life in South-East Asia, and that even those of India, Pakistan and Ceylon had some extraordinary blind spots. Colonel Nasser admitted to a British journalist that it took him five days to achieve any bearings at all, and the fact that he left Bandung with the intention of visiting Djakarta, Tokyo, Peking and Kabul; Sami Solh (Lebanon), Walid Salan (Jordan) and the Emir Seifel Islam (Yemen) to visit Tokyo; Al Azhari (Sudan) and Khalid el Azm (Syria) to visit Delhi and Karachi, and Prince Feisal (Saudi Arabia) Delhi; and Fadhel Jamali to visit Manila, Taipei and Tokyo cannot but be salutary. The standard of debate, too, improved steadily throughout the week and diffident English speakers such as Al Azhari and Prince Norodom (Cambodia) appeared to have gained both in delivery and in confidence.

21. There is no possible doubt about (ii) and it occurs to me that in its propaganda directed at this area the West should go out of its way to emphasise, over and over again, its dedication to peace and determination not to resort to nuclear or thermo-nuclear weapons unless first attacked. The term "peace" is debased currency in the West but full value in most of the Orient. Any suggestion, too, of bullying or sabre-rattling would boomerang immediately in the area's present mood, though the determination of the West to act promptly and decisively should necessity arise should, of course, be made clear.

22. As regards (iii), I am convinced that the constant references to the United Nations both in speeches and in the final communiqué were very far from perfunctory. Indeed, they follow naturally on from (ii) above. Pakistan was conspicuously United Nations-minded and the general desire to increase its efficacy, of which item F.(1) is a particular, and admittedly self-interested, manifestation, strikes me as healthy. I would judge the prestige of the Organisation to have emerged enhanced at the end of the week; and if progress were possible on the lines of item E.(1) not only would one deep-seated Arab grievance be alleviated but the above temporary advance in the Organisation's prestige permanently consolidated.

23. (iv) can only be a matter of opinion which subsequent events will prove right or wrong. But in partial support of this assessment an Egyptian delegate went out of his way to emphasise that, despite his instant warming to Chou En-Lai's personality, Colonel Nasser had made it clear to him in Rangoon that he would not consider recognition of communist China; and that the Egyptian Prime Minister was now going to Peking simply to discuss a Chinese proposal to buy Egyptian cotton and increase his general knowledge.

24. Chou En-Lai knew of course that most of the countries whose delegations he would meet at Bandung did not recognise China, and were likely to be as scared of him as chicken of a fox. This was indeed obvious from the sudden tension whenever he appeared, and almost painful concentration on his every movement. The key to his behaviour at Bandung is, I think, that he had set himself the task of leaving the delegates with an impression of himself not as an iron man of destiny, controlling a population of 600 million, but of someone who was open to argument, not unkindly

disposed to his Asiatic and African brothers, and above all reasonable and with whom one could do business. His determination to leave such an impression ruled his conduct throughout the Conference, and having a large measure of self-control he never allowed himself to be diverted. I am inclined, therefore, to think that his offer to negotiate with America should be read in this context only, though I hope I may be proved utterly wrong.

25. In (v), the setback to Gandhian neutralism, it may well be that I am attaching too much importance to a debating reverse that could have been due as much to fatigue as anything else. But I would judge its long-term effect to be salutary not only to the numerous fence-sitters represented at the Conference but also to Pandit Nehru himself. If his discomfiture lasted he cannot but do some serious thinking now; and since he has already demonstrated his readiness on occasion to modify the sacrosanct precepts of his mentor I see no reason why he should not do so again in this instance. Gandhian neutralism derives from Satya Graha or the principle of passive resistance, an effective enough weapon against the British colonial conscience but ludicrous in any totalitarian context. Mahatma Gandhi claimed in the last war that he would apply it equally to the Japanese but it was never of course put to the test. Pandit Nehru has now failed to sell this brand of neutralism to a panel, not of imperialists or potential aggressors, but of Asiatic and African fellow-statesmen whose general weakness and incapacity for aggression is not in doubt. He has also accepted in principle the right of self-defence, singly or collectively. I shall be surprised therefore if a new Nehru neutralism does not see the light of day.

26. Finally, although it is only a matter of technique, I offer conclusion (vi) in all seriousness. It is based on more than twenty years' experience of the Orient and has long been apparent to me, but never more so than after this unique gathering. We in the West are in effect competing for twenty-seven shy and wary adolescent Eastern nations, each with a varying legacy of occupation and psychological humiliation (I exclude China and North Vietnam). What I think we tend to forget sometimes is that for the Eastern nations actions do not necessarily speak louder than words. There is little gratitude and awkward facts can be forgotten with surprising ease. By

contrast words, vital, hopeful, constructive words, are what influence action here. The East is no longer age-old, inscrutable, unchanging. It is young, eager, drunk with new nationalism and freedom, but also desperately anxious to behave with maturity and make a good showing before its elders if not betters. It loses its angularity only when treated as a grown-up and an equal, and like all adolescents is easily offended, and as easily influenced for good. I think that we in the West, jejune, cynical and exhausted, have need of greater imagination and understanding of the new Asia and Africa, and more patience with it. Our approach, at this critical time, is all-important and has been, I submit, too materialistic (realistic if you like) and too destructive. We should appeal at least as much to idealism and the things of the spirit as to materialism. Here indeed we have an advantage over communism. At the same time we should not always be on the defensive, anti-this or anti-that. Let us if possible be constructive instead, talk of the glorious future that may open up for the

Orient—if not disrupted by communist subversion and aggression—when Eastern nations, strong, united and free from fear, can share with us the full enjoyment of those civil and other liberties for which we, in Western history, fought with such determination and sacrifice. And so on. For the adolescent Oriental politician sees what he considers the shortcomings and failures of his Western elders and is inwardly determined to avoid them and go one better. He is an optimist and fidgets at too much pessimism. A wise schoolmaster canalises youthful enthusiasm, and an unwise one sours it. We are genuinely respected and indeed have a unique position in the Orient to-day—a favourite uncle, shrewd, calm, tolerant and worldly wise, with no “Big Brother” connotation. Let us be wise and seize our opportunity with both hands before it is too late. This conference, out of which all agreed that Britain came out remarkably well, has shown that there is still time.

I have, &c.

R. W. PARKES.