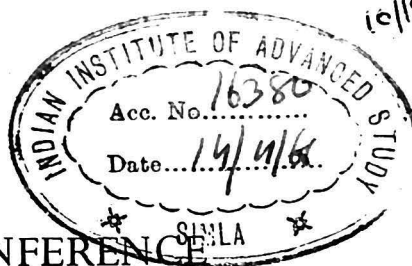


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THE BANDUNG CONFERENCE

By DERRICK SINGTON

Report of a lecture delivered to the Royal Central Asian Society on Wednesday, June 1, 1955, Admiral Sir Cecil Harcourt, G.B.E., K.C.B., in the chair.

The CHAIRMAN: Mr. Sington, who has kindly come to talk to us this afternoon, described himself to me as a broadcasting journalist. He did not start his career in that way but became a free-lance journalist shortly before the recent war, during which, amongst other things, he was in the Intelligence Corps and at one time was in command of a propaganda unit in north-west Germany, which included being in command of the first unit to enter Belsen. Since the war Mr. Sington has been a whole-time broadcasting journalist and connected with various papers, including *The Manchester Guardian*. He has made a special study of the Bandung Conference and I now ask him to address us.

IN the first place, I should make clear that I was not at the Bandung Conference, much to my regret. I have, however, been able to talk at length with those who were there; I followed the Conference with a fair amount of care and concentration and have since tried to analyse the results of the Conference as carefully as I have been able to. Moreover, I was out in South-East Asia in February and March, just before the Bandung Conference in April, when I attended the SEATO Conference at Bangkok and had an opportunity of gauging the feeling and mood of the inviting Powers, India and Burma, as well as of Thailand.

Secondly, it may be helpful, in gathering the results together, to consider who eventually took part in the Asian-African Conference at Bandung, a conference of African and Asian countries which may prove to be historic. By my reckoning the countries which took part in the Conference fall into four fairly neat groups. As far as I can count them up, there were 15 East Asian countries represented—that is, countries roughly east of Afghanistan—5 African, and 9 Middle Eastern countries. The large number of Middle Eastern countries that attended the Conference is significant and important, because they represented points of view in many ways radically different from those of the Colombo Powers under the leadership of India, Burma and Indonesia. Up to that time attempts to co-ordinate and group all the countries of Africa and Asia had been largely confined to those Powers. For the first time the Colombo Powers, led by Mr. Nehru, with his ideas of neutralism and areas of peace, have been jostling up against other groups of Asian countries. As I have said, the group of Middle Eastern countries displayed at the Bandung Conference points of view very different from those held by the Colombo bloc, and, in some ways, they tended to counterbalance what one might call the Nehru-Nu axis, the India and Burma leadership, in which of course East Asia, Ceylon, Pakistan also play their part.

Having said that, I confess that when I heard the results of the Conference and read the lengthy *communiqué* it seemed amazing that such a long and complex *communiqué* had been agreed upon, because the twenty-



nine countries had such immensely different interests, different régimes, different states of development, different degrees of dependence. That all the countries concerned could reach so much common ground seems to have been a most remarkable achievement—in fact, a surprising achievement.

Also, to come to the next point—and I have heard this from a colleague of mine who has interviewed the African delegates to the Bandung Conference—one of the results the African delegates found they got out of the Conference was an understanding of what it meant to work out a compromise. The delegates had to hammer out compromises on all sorts of problems and, in the end, they succeeded in issuing the unanimously supported and skilfully drafted final *communiqué*, an agreed declaration by twenty-nine different countries of Asia and Africa.

I cite as an example the probably most crucial issue on which delegates had to compromise, the issue of the Nehru thesis, which is an extreme version of what the states in Asia tend to believe, the clash between the Nehru thesis and the thesis, we will say, of Mohammed Ali of Pakistan, the clash between the thesis that defensive alliance groups, blocs of Powers or military blocs, are undesirable because they lead towards war, and the thesis of many other countries represented, such as the Iraqis and Turks, that their security can only be built up within some sort of defensive alliance. That was a very formidable clash at Bandung, but in spite of it a compromise was worked out in the end.

In the *communiqué* there are two clauses which seem to me to form the most interesting part of the *communiqué* issued by the Conference because they show the sort of struggle that went on. Article 6A, Section D, says: "The Asian-African Conference recommend respect for the right of each nation to defend itself, singly or collectively, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations"—"singly or collectively." Then a modifying clause says: "Abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defence to serve the particular interests of any of the big Powers." Thirdly, "Abstention by any country from exerting pressure on other countries through such means." In other words, a clear compromise. While there was the Nehru thesis that defensive alliances are dangerous, there was agreement that such alliances may be desirable but, at the same time, agreement that defensive alliances should not put the smaller Powers in the hands of or at the mercy too much of the policies of the Great Powers. That is an interesting example of compromise.

Clearly there had to be omissions at Bandung. Out of the final *communiqué*, the Conference dropped any reference to Formosa, clearly because on that there would have been too many conflicting views. Sir John Kotelawala, the Ceylonese Prime Minister, did, in fact, propose at a Press Conference that Formosa should be put under trusteeship of the Colombo Powers, but I understand that this was not taken up in the committees or in the plenary sessions, and it was not embodied in the final *communiqué*. So that the Conference decided that Formosa was not a problem that could be satisfactorily handled. That seems to have been a wise decision and is, perhaps, an indication that the countries represented realized that it would be unwise to set their sights too high, and so try to

inflate the Conference into a gathering which could quite easily settle the problems of the world by declarations and attitudes on platforms. It showed a certain maturity that some of those at Bandung did not try to work out their own solution of the Formosan problem.

I am trying to set forth what I believe to be the positive side of the Bandung Conference and, to go on to another point, it seems that the *communiqué* shows a spirit of restraint on some of the issues, particularly that of colonialism on which all the delegates present had undoubtedly strong feelings to which they were deeply committed. For example, there was a tendency in all the pronouncements about colonialism, such as in regard to West New Guinea, to make the phrasing quite diplomatic and try to bring in the United Nations—not a suggestion that one side must climb down but a suggestion that problems should be settled by negotiation. In fact, the resolution regarding West New Guinea simply urged the Netherlands Government to reopen negotiations and hoped the United Nations would assist the parties concerned to find a peaceful solution to the dispute—not getting hot under the collar, which seems to me to be a sign of maturity.

Perhaps an obviously positive though not a spectacular side of the Conference was the educative influence among all the delegates. I believe, for instance, that it took Colonel Nasser, the Egyptian Prime Minister, quite a long time to get his bearings because he had not had much experience of the Far East; and certainly the African delegates at the Conference told my colleagues that they had profited greatly simply from the unique contact which really amounted to contact with the whole of Asia, and of course a number of arrangements for visits to various countries have sprung out of the Bandung Conference. There is already an Egyptian delegation in Peking and I read this morning that they have signed a cultural agreement with China. That is, at any rate, one result of the Bandung Conference. Whether a further development will be recognition of Peking by the Middle Eastern countries remains to be seen. None of the Middle Eastern countries, so far as I know, have yet recognized the Peking Government, and one wonders whether one of the concrete results of the Bandung Conference might not be recognition of Peking by Egypt, Syria and so on.

The Conference at Bandung was not spectacular in the sense that it could alter the situation in the world to a great extent in the short term. Having said something about the positive side as seen in the maturity of the discussions, the spirit of compromise, the educative value of the Conference, the restraint shown on the whole, I would like to say a word or two in regard to some of the impulses behind the Conference.

What was it that caused these twenty-nine countries with so many differences of view, so many different and conflicting ideas, to compromise as they did? From what I have heard from those who have returned from the Conference, and also from my own knowledge of Asia throughout the years, it seems that the binding force was a consciousness among all the delegates and in all the countries represented, of an emergence from rule by a foreign country or foreign countries; a feeling of emergence, a feeling of newly won freedom and, in some cases, of course, the problem arose in

countries which were still under colonial or a similar form of rule. But the binding threat was the consciousness of newly won nationhood, and the problems which faced the countries which had newly won their freedom. That was the binding thread, and it seems to have been strong enough to bind Turkey, Japan, the Gold Coast; in fact to bind countries right across the greater part of the world's surface. That came out in Sections C, D and F of the *communiqué* which deal with the principles of human rights and self-determination and the problems of dependent peoples. These sections which, again, were temperately phrased, covered the general urge for independence and national freedom which is felt over the greater part of Asia and, I believe, Africa.

When we come to the actual points on colonialism which were raised at the Conference, the specific countries and areas referred to, the Conference becomes interesting in a rather more concrete way, because the actual cases touched on at Bandung of survival of colonial rule and so on, form rather a mixed bag, though in some ways a highly selective one. While there are some striking omissions, it is not surprising that the South African Government policy of racial discrimination is condemned. It is not surprising, in view of recent history, that North Africa and Algeria were included in the resolutions as surviving colonial rule; it is more surprising that Palestine was included and that claims to Aden by the Yemen were included; Palestine particularly, because it is perhaps not a case of colonial rule; it is, rather, a conflict between two races. Three of the countries included—North Africa, Palestine and the Yemen—all concern Muslim areas or areas which have been Muslim. There one can go back to the strength of the Middle Eastern delegation to the Conference, nine countries out of the twenty-nine; those nine were able to get the Yemen and Palestine mentioned in the *communiqué*.

But what was omitted which one might have expected to appear? There was no mention of Cyprus, although Archbishop Makarios was at the Conference. There was no mention of Malaya, although the Malaysians were at Bandung; no mention of Sarawak, although Sarawak observers were present; and there was no mention of Kenya by name, although one does hear a good many attacks on British policy in Kenya by Asian and African people. The policy in those areas was not attacked at all, and they are all British—Kenya, Sarawak, Malaya and Cyprus. Undoubtedly one reason for that was that there was not a strong enough element among the delegates to push their claims. Probably another reason is that Britain has acquired a good deal of credit in Asia and Africa over her policy of granting independence to countries which are ready for nationhood—Pakistan, Ceylon, Burma and, more recently, the Gold Coast and Nigeria. And perhaps the reason why there was no direct attack on British policy in those four remaining colonial regions was due to the reserve of goodwill the British have accumulated in Africa and Asia through their enlightened treatment of the people, training them and finally handing the people their independence.

I have omitted one country—Holland—which came under attack, in a sense, in the *communiqué*, Indonesia, with claims to West New Guinea, which claims got into the *communiqué* largely because Indonesia was the

host country of the Conference and the claims had been discussed by the five Colombo Powers. The Bandung Conference decided to support the Indonesian claims to West New Guinea probably as a *geste de politesse* to the host country.

So much for what the *communiqué* had to say about colonialism, the problems of dependent countries; so much for what it had to say by way of criticism of ruling countries. All that part of the *communiqué* dealt with what is essentially European colonialism.

Let me now pass on to what many regard as the Newer Colonialism and potential colonialism; in other words, Communist colonialism. In this regard the Conference is extremely interesting, because there was an exceedingly fierce debate in the Political Committee as to whether when the Conference condemned colonialism it should mention Communist colonialism by name. One of the surprises of the Bandung Conference was that a clear majority of all the countries represented took a very strong anti-Communist line or anti-Communist colonialism line. As far as I have been able to gather, as many as eighteen out of the twenty-nine countries took a very strong line in condemnation of Communist colonialism. In passing, one might mention that there were present at the Conference observers from some areas of the Russian Asiatic Republics; from the National Turkestan Unity Committee which represents the anti-Communist refugees from Asiatic Russia; but, again, their complaints about being colonized by Russia and dominated by a foreign people did not get into the *communiqué*. I asked several colleagues who were at the Bandung Conference about this and they said it was true that they had not had their complaints dealt with. That seemed extraordinary because they are largely Muslim republics, Asiatic republics or colonies in Russia, and there was at the Conference a strong Muslim element, but still there was no mention of those republics in the *communiqué*, probably because they were remote and far away compared with the Yemen and Aden; being very remote from Eastern Asian countries these peoples in Central Asia who complain of Russian colonialism have not aroused much sympathy. At any rate, they did not get into the *communiqué*, although there was a strong move in the Political Committee to mention Communist colonialism by name, and these eighteen countries, eight or nine of them Middle Eastern countries, voted against Communist colonialism.

What happened ultimately, I understand, in regard to Communist colonialism was that a compromise was arrived at on the suggestions of the Indians that instead of mentioning Communist colonialism by name there should be in the final *communiqué* a statement that colonialism was condemned in all its manifestations. I believe Mr. Chou En-lai from Peking was against that; he fought quite hard because of the implication that it was Communist colonialism. It was the Turks, I gather, who said finally that if this was not accepted they would not sign the *communiqué* and therefore there would be no unanimous *communiqué*; so that there was something of a showdown, I understand, on that actual course.

Now is the time to try to say something as to, perhaps, the most important practical aspect of the whole Conference, and that is the Chinese part in the Bandung Conference. From what observers have told me,

there seems to be no doubt that Mr. Chou En-lai achieved a good deal. He had gone to Bandung with the intention of being as friendly as possible towards the Conference as a whole, and he seems to have succeeded. He seems, according to my information, to have made quite an impression to the effect that the intentions of the Peking Government may not be expansionist and aggressive. He did not, as is clear from what I tried to say earlier, convince the Conference that Communism itself was not in many ways a threatening force, but he did succeed, as far as I have been able to ascertain, in making a number of contacts which are likely to be fruitful, and he also impressed many of the delegates, particularly a number of the Middle East delegates, with his personality and, to some extent I gather, with his possible sincerity. So that there would seem to have been considerable success for Peking and Mr. Chou En-lai. Whether you regard that as a sinister or good thing depends entirely on what you think are the motives and intentions of the Peking leaders. If you believe, as I do, that the People's Republic of China needs years of the most intensive domestic reconstruction in order to solve the most desperate economic problems that any country has to face, that is, catching up with the giants of the East and West on a very small industrial basis in a somewhat overcrowded country with a rapidly increasing population, if you believe that for that reason alone the Peking leaders most need peace at the moment, then you will understand that the conciliatory attitude of Chou En-lai, Mao Tse Tung's Foreign Minister, may have been sincere. It, at any rate, entirely altered the conclusions about China's predicament and China's future policy.

The preference for China at the Bandung Conference seems to have led to a small conference within the larger one, because China, of course, was not directly concerned with the Middle East and not directly concerned with Africa. China was concerned with her relationship with Indo-China, South-East Asia, Burma, Thailand, and also concerned with the Formosa problem. But China was mainly concerned at Bandung with her South-East Asian neighbours. The small conference within the big one included Burma and Thailand, but it did not take place in the Conference Hall; it took place in corridors and at the hotels. Burma, Thailand, North and South Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia came into this smaller conference, together with Indonesia. It was a diplomatic offensive by Chou En-lai and also, in a way, by Mr. Nehru, to try to establish what he calls his "area of peace" in South-East Asia, and Chou En-lai's diplomatic efforts to reach the most advantageous outcome in Southern Asia.

We know, of course, that Chou En-lai did a number of things: he signed an agreement with the Indonesian Government over the nationality of the Chinese minority in Indonesia, making their position much clearer and starting, perhaps, to solve the problem of the divided loyalties in overseas Chinese minorities abroad in South-East Asia. I am told also that Chou En-lai made a general declaration in regard to Chinese minorities in South-East Asia, saying he was prepared to settle their status in the same way as he had settled the status of the Chinese in Indonesia. That would mean that his declaration applied to Chinese in Malaya, which is interesting. I heard that in official circles recently there has been some discussion

as to whether Chou En-lai intends that this should mean that the Chinese in Malaya will help or whether he conceives it possible to exercise some influence in forwarding a settlement in Malaya. That was one aspect of Chou En-lai's proposal.

He also invited Prince Wan, the Siamese delegate, to visit the Chinese border areas to assure himself there were no aggressive build-ups or aggressive intentions in that part of the world. And of course Chou En-lai supported very strongly the declaration of the five principles of co-existence. It can be said that in his efforts Chou En-lai received a great deal of support from Mr. Nehru and from U Nu.

Chou En-lai also had contacts with Mohammed Ali, and this is of interest because Mohammed Ali represents Pakistan. Apparently their conversations were friendly and assurances were given on both sides as to their intentions, and so on. That was yet another of Chou En-lai's efforts. There was also an interesting contact within Indo-China, not only between China and the rest of South-East Asia, and this was the contact between the Prime Minister of Laos and Ho-Chi-Min's Prime Minister. They signed a special bilateral declaration of friendly co-existence by which Vietminh have committed themselves not to interfere further in Laos, which, if carried through, will be very important because Laos is one of the remaining states of Indo-China which is not yet in the hands of the Communists. It might indicate that there is a real will to meet an emergency in that area at the moment, by means of the agreement between Laos and Vietminh which I understand was reached between Mr. Nehru and Chou En-lai trying to settle a disturbed area between China and South-East Asia.

I have dealt with everything except two very long sections of the *communiqué* which concern an important though not spectacular side of the Conference, perhaps one of the least spectacular, namely the economic and cultural co-operation which the Conference was to encourage, without being too ambitious, between Asian and African countries.

The most interesting part of this long *communiqué* is an agreed testimony to the help that has been received from the Western countries. The whole of this *communiqué* was, of course, signed by Mr. Chou En-lai. It records, for example, that there have been "valuable contributions already" of economic assistance for the Asian and African countries from those outside; in other words from the West. It is quite clear that Chou En-lai signed that *communiqué* with his tongue in his cheek, because when he made his report in Peking to the National People's Congress he said something quite different: that the Asian countries should rely on their own resources instead of relying on help from the Western colonial Powers. Nevertheless, he signed that *communiqué* which records a great amount of help from the non-Communist Powers.

Another aspect of interest is the stress on the United Nations, recommending the establishment of a United Nations Committee for economic development; the allocation by the World Bank of a greater part of its resources to the Asian and African countries; the early establishment of the International Finance Corporation, and so on—all carefully avoiding any mention of the Colombo Plan and carefully avoiding also, as far as I can

see, any specific mention of the United States of America. There is great concentration and emphasis on the help which has been received from the United Nations. That is understandable because most of the Asian countries are nervous about aid which comes from an individual big Power in view of the possibility of strings being attached to it. On the whole, the United Nations economic aid, although there is little of it in some ways, is much more popular in Eastern Asian areas, and that is evident in the *communiqué*.

Another item of interest is in connection with discrimination against Asian and African nations, the "expressed concern that the shipping lines reviewed from time to time their freight rates, often to the detriment of participating countries." I heard it said in Indonesia that a certain shipping company did sometimes discriminate to the disadvantage of Indonesia. That kind of discrimination is referred to in the *communiqué*.

I gather that there is not to be a secretariat or anything of that nature as a sequel to the Bandung Conference. Mr. Nehru was opposed to that on the ground that already secretariats are multiplied beyond all reason and that, in any case, secretariats do nothing. There is, however, provision for "liaison officers for the exchange of information and ideas" and I suppose, depending on how they are followed up, the recommendations for economic co-operation, exchange of students and facilities between African and Asian countries, will speed up co-operation of that kind.

A final word as to the attitude of Japan. I gather that the Japanese delegation to Bandung was very heavily weighted with economic delegates and experts, and that the interest of Japan seemed to be very strongly in trade with all the countries concerned. I notice that a number of visits have already been planned. I am not sure whether or not Saudi Arabia is going to be visited by the Japanese. I take it that the interest of Japan is primarily in increase of trade, which is a pressing problem if Japan is to meet the needs of her over-populated island. Secondly, I am told the Japanese showed considerable emotion and were very emphatic in supporting the parts of the *communiqué* which urged international control and eventual abolition of nuclear warfare. Japan, being the first victim, felt this to be an important problem. Those were the salient features of Japan's attitude to the Bandung Conference.

The CHAIRMAN: Mr. Singleton has kindly offered to answer any questions members of the audience wish to ask.

Group-Captain H. ST. CLAIR SMALLWOOD: I would like to ask Mr. Singleton whether the question of population was discussed at the Conference. He mentioned the attitude of Japan in regard to economics, a matter largely ruled by her very rapidly increasing population. I have a pet theory that the number of people in China is deliberately exaggerated by the Chinese Communists. One hears the figure of 600,000,000 being accepted generally, but my feeling is that there are not more than 500,000,000 Chinese, but China went to the Conference with the backing of the higher population figure. It would be interesting to hear whether Chou En-lai used that factor in order to hammer home China's arguments at the Bandung Conference.

Mr. SINGTON: That is an interesting question. I have not heard of any discussion on population at the Conference and I cannot find anything in the *communiqué* on that subject. As to the second point, the 600,000,000 includes Chinese abroad, and they account for 28,000,000, which would bring the total down to 572,000,000, which is still a high figure. There seems to be a great deal of substance in Group-Captain Smallwood's suggestion, but actually more interesting is the fact that parts of those countries within Asia are under-populated and parts over-populated. India and China are immensely over-populated; Malaya and Burma are under-populated. Some arrangement within the region so that the middle area might be open to controlled immigration would be beneficial.

Mr. CORRY: Could Mr. Sington give a broad outline of what was agreed at Bandung in regard to the Chinese in Indonesia?

Mr. SINGTON: I am not very well up on that problem. I know there is a period of a year within which they can deem to opt either to take Indonesian or Chinese nationality. What I am not sure of is what happens to those who do not so opt. The Indonesians certainly will not opt not to be Indonesians.

Mrs. ST. JOHN COOKE: There were twenty-nine nationalities represented at the Bandung Conference. What language was used?

Mr. SINGTON: English, I understand.

Colonel G. ROUTH: What was the effect of Sir John Kotelawala's attack on Communism?

Mr. SINGTON: I tried to outline what happened in the Political Committee, where the attack took place and where the support for this kind of attitude was forthcoming from about eighteen out of the twenty-nine countries. Mostly the leading countries supported the condemnatory attitude. Turkey, the Philippines, Thailand, Pakistan and Iraq all took a very critical line towards the Communists, and a number of other countries supported them, including, I understand, Egypt, which is surprising.

Miss M. W. KELLY: What was the Persian attitude, sir?

Mr. SINGTON: The Persians supported the very strong line taken in regard to Communism.

The CHAIRMAN: As there do not appear to be any further questions and our time is nearly up, I now thank Mr. Sington very much indeed for coming and giving such a clear analysis of what took place at the Bandung Conference. That was a most important event in the world's history and, to my mind, it was quite a forward step. We thank you very much, Mr. Sington, for taking so much trouble to give details as to what took place at the Conference. (*Applause.*)

