CHAPTER 12

The Truth Behind the “Kashmir Princess” Incident

Li Hong

Abstract

In February 1955, Taiwanese spy agencies learned that Zhou Enlai would be attending the Bandung Conference in Malaysia, whereupon they organized a plot to have him killed on his flight out of Hong Kong. The crash of the Indian airliner “Kashmir Princess,” slated to carry Zhou and his entourage, shook the world on April 11. Deeply grieved by the plane crash, Zhou—who for health reasons delayed his travel—personally oversaw efforts to crack the case, dispatching trusted intelligence officer Xiong Xianghui to Hong Kong as his liaison with other intelligence bodies. In June 1956, British authorities in Hong Kong arrested 44 Chiang Kai-Shek spies, who were all expelled from the territory, and thus let free. On August 4, Zhou lodged a formal complaint with British authorities and solemnly declared that “the British government still bears an inescapable international responsibility. Although investigations into the Kashmir Princess incident ended fruitlessly, the Chinese government—particularly Zhou himself—made enormous efforts to expose the destructive American-Taiwanese plot and impel the British authorities in Hong Kong to make arrests and break the case. The sacrifices made in the pursuit of world peace by the martyrs on board will forever be remembered.

Keywords

Zhou Enlai – Kashmir Princess – Truth

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Fifty-seven years have passed since the Kashmir Princess incident rocked China and the world in April 1955. Chinese and foreign media have continuously reported on the incident for over half a decade, but the truth of the incident remains obscure, alternative explanations rampant, and misunderstandings abundant. As one of the people who participated in handling the aftermath of the affair, I have an obligation to divulge what I know in order to clarify the truth.

1. The Center Decides to Dispatch Zhou Enlai to Lead the Chinese Delegation to the Afro-Asian Bandung Conference

In the 1950s, there were great changes to the international order. As the Korean War ended and wide-scale economic construction began in China, our nation urgently needed a new international environment of peace and security. Anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism movements were hitting crescendo among Asian and African nations at the time. They were demanding peace, demanding independence, demanding to develop their national economies. At the same time, demands to improve relations with China were growing increasingly fervent. The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence were gradually becoming a consensus among the Asian and African nations that accounted for half of the world’s population. Under such auspices, the Center decided to open the gate and walk out into the wider world. On July 7, 1954, when discussing the Geneva Conference with an enlarged meeting of the Politburo, Zhou said, “we originally wanted to keep the door closed another year, but it now seems we can’t keep it closed any longer.” Mao Zedong affirmed Zhou’s point, saying “can’t keep it shut, can’t close it, so we have to walk out.”

On January 15, 1955, Indonesian Prime Minister Sastroamidjojo sent a letter to Zhou, inviting him to the Bandung Afro-Asian Conference in mid-April on behalf of the five host nations—Burma, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), India, Indonesia, and Pakistan. On February 10, Zhou responded affirming his desire to attend and his desire to make efforts to promote cooperation between Asian and African nations.

Twenty-nine nations were represented at the conference, but only six had established relations with China (Afghanistan, Burma, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam). The other 23 all maintained “diplomatic relations” with the Guomindang on Taiwan. China’s attendance of the Afro-Asian Conference was bound to exert a great influence on Asian and African regions, as well as the entire world. The U.S. and Chiang Kai-shek were both afraid of such a situation, and so they used every trick in their arsenal to thwart and destroy the Chinese delegation to the conference.