

April 21, 1960

**Record of Conversation between Zhou Enlai and
Vice-President Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan**

Citation:

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Summary:

Vice-President Radhakrishnan discussed the historical mutual friendship between China and India. He indicated that the mutual friendship will help to solve the border dispute. Zhou replied that the historical disputes shall be resolved by the new government.

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(I-II Installment) Premier Chou En-lai accompanied by Vice-Premier
Subject File #26 Marshal Chen Yi, Vice Foreign Minister, Chang Han-Fu

and several other members of the Chinese Delegation called on the Vice-President at his residence at 9.30 a.m. today (21.4.1960) and were with him till 11.15 a.m.

The Vice-President, initiating the discussion, recalled his inability to accept the invitation of the Chinese Government to visit Peking last October. The invitation dated 19th October was received by him on the 24th October but on the 21st a serious clash between an Indian police party and Chinese Frontier Guards had occurred near Kongka Pass. In those circumstances he could not very well visit China.

The Vice-President said he was speaking more in sorrow than in anger. He pointed out that India had shown every anxiety to continue her age-old friendship with China and to strengthen the bonds of understanding between the thousand million people of these two countries. It was in this spirit that independent India had in 1950 refused to take the Tibet issue to the United Nations, and when it was raised there by others, counselled restraint. The same spirit was shown in the Panch Sheel agreement (1954) and reaffirmed at Bandung (1955); and the information about Chinese incursions was not given immediately to Parliament and the people (1957-58). Year after year India had been pressing for China's admission into the U.N. In 1956 the Dalai Lama was persuaded to return to his rightful place in Lhasa. Now the people of this country are genuinely desirous of friendship with the Chinese people and their welfare, but when tragic incidents happened on our borders a wave of indignation swept across India which the Prime Minister had been trying to control and restrain. But in a democratic country like India it was not possible to curb the strong reactions of the people.

The Vice-President, continuing, stated that the friendship between these two great countries of Asia was more important than any bits of territory. "We long for peace but as our Prime Minister mentioned in his Banquet speech, the very spirit of Buddha and Gandhi is being challenged by these recent unfortunate events. We are mystified at these new claims in view of the statements made earlier to our Prime Minister that the old Chinese maps would be revised."

Finally, the Vice-President said that our Prime Minister was our greatest leader and China's best friend. "He wants the problem to be settled with self-respect for both the countries. The interest of this great friendship should not be set aside for minor problems and unjust territorial gains."

Premier Chou En-lai, in reply, stated that with regard to the basic principle as indicated in the speeches made on the 19th and 20th of April, both sides were agreed. The fact that they had come all the way from China was a proof of their desire for friendship and their wish that these differences should not be exaggerated. They recognised that the people of India and China desired friendship between the two countries. The visit to the Chinese Pavilion in the World Agricultural Fair by millions of Indians was proof of how the people of India cherished friendly feelings towards China.

But it had to be recognised that there were historical reasons for the present problem. These were problems left as imperialist legacies and therefore should be resolved by the new Governments of India and China. The incidents which occurred were certainly unfortunate but were entirely unexpected as could be seen from the fact that the Chinese Government had extended an invitation to the Vice-President only two days before the clash in Kongka Pass. As a proof of their desire to

avoid such incidents, the Chinese Government had stopped sending patrols along the Sino-Indian border.

Vice-President: "Recognising the desire for friendship on both sides, it is imperative that we give concrete expression to this urge for friendship. Our words should be backed by deeds". He stated that the Chinese had occupied Tibet only in 1950 and reached the southern limits of Sinkiang only in 1892. So before that there could have been no Chinese administrative, much less military, personnel in Aksai Chin.. In fact, Ladakh was definitely a part of the State of Jammu & Kashmir and when the British Indian Government in 1870 wanted to use the caravan routes in Aksai Chin the then Governor-General, Lord Mayo wrote for permission to the Maharaja of Kashmir. So even the British Government, one of the mightiest powers of the time, had to get this permission. This was proof enough of the sovereignty and administrative jurisdiction of Kashmir over these areas.

The Vice-President added that it would be unfortunate if this problem could not be settled with our present Prime Minister as it certainly would be more difficult to resolve in the future. The Chinese Premier must recognise that there was great resentment in our country and it was only our Prime Minister who could restrain it. The Vice-President further said, "we do not want you to go back empty handed to China. Therefore you must try and come to some sort of satisfactory settlement, consonant with the self-respect of both countries".

Mr. Chou En-lai said that it was not a fact that China had only exercised her jurisdiction in Tibet since 1950. Tibet and China had had relations for the last 1300 years and in fact Tibet became a part of China 700 or 800 years ago. Similarly, Sinkiang had been a part of China for a long period.

The Vice-President stated that he was not a student of history and did not want to go into details. The important question was the fact that the two countries should be not just neighbours but friends. It should not matter if it was necessary to give up some territory here or there but the important thing was to bind the Indian people closer to the Chinese people. From 1947 onwards the Indian people had been great friends of the Chinese people.

Chou En-lai replied that the Chinese could not give up territory here or there without reason or justification. With regard to the eastern sector of the border he stated that neither the present nor the previous Central Governments of China had recognised the so-called MacMahon Line. India only advanced her control in this area since her Independence but even though China did not recognise the MacMahon line, she had not violated it. China advocated the maintenance of the status quo and had not raised any territorial claims south of the MacMahon Line.

The Vice-President stated, "All right, you recognise the MacMahon Line in the east; you should similarly recognise and settle the position on the western ~~max~~ side in discussion with the Prime Minister so that this resentment is not allowed to grow."

Premier Chou En-lai interjected that there should be mutual accommodation on both sides.

At this stage Foreign Minister Chen Yi said he would like to speak. He stated that they had great respect for the Vice-President and therefore they listened to him with interest. But he hoped the Vice-President and the Indian side would also listen to them. In the past the imperialist countries had bullied both India and China. India had been bullied by only one power, but China had been bullied by a number of them. China today could not

be bullied by the imperialists but when "our Indian friends want to bully us, then we do not know what to do". There were many people like J.P. Narayan in China but the Chinese democracy controlled them. When the Chinese Government wanted the Vice-President to come to China, it was not to find fault but with a view to settling this unfortunate problem.

When Prime Minister Nehru invited Premier Chou to Delhi they had at first considered reiterating their invitation to come to China or alternatively of fixing the meeting, as proposed earlier in Rangoon. But after consideration the Chinese Government had felt that in the interest of friendship Premier Chou should come to Delhi for these discussions. This again was a proof of Chinese sincerity.

Chen Yi then referred to the American base in Okinawa, the revival of Japanese and German militarism and the aggressive posture of the Seventh Fleet in Chinese waters. These were a threat and a danger to China and for this reason China hoped to make her relations with India along the Sino-Indian border quite peaceful. There was no need for China to hurt India and to create two fronts - one against the western powers and another against India.

The Vice-President again affirmed that India had always followed an anti-imperialist policy whether in Asia or Africa. On this issue also we adopt a similar attitude. It should not be impossible to come to an agreed solution which, as the Prime Minister had stated the previous evening quoting the Buddha would be a victory for all because it would be the defeat of no one. He underlined the use of the words "I pray for a peaceful settlement" by the Prime Minister as significant of his deep and earnest desire for such a settlement.

Marshal Chen Yi said that he had no doubt about Prime Minister Nehru settling this issue now or in the future. The Vice-President agreed with this wholeheartedly.

Marshal Chen Yi also invited the Vice-President to visit China and the Vice-President said that he would come whenever it was convenient.

The Vice-President remarked to the Chinese Prime Minister that according to the newspapers he looked grave after his talk with the Indian Prime Minister. The Prime Minister was aware that ours was a free press and at least some of the newspapers ~~said~~ said all manner of things which were not authentic or accurate. To this Mr. Chou En-lai replied that they in China did not believe in this kind of freedom; for example if he smiled then the Indian ^{papers} ~~said~~ said that it was a false smile and if he did not smile then they said that he was grave. Chen Yi added that about their meeting with Mr. Krishna Menon the Indian press had said that Mr. Menon had made some sort of a dramatic intervention at their request. The fact was that the meeting with the Defence Minister was arranged by the Indian Government.

Mr. Chou En-lai then said that for the past ten years China had been trying to build itself internally and even when the differences appeared last year, there was no campaign to arouse national sentiments against India. The Indian Ambassador in Peking had always been courteously treated but he could not say the same about the treatment meted out to the Chinese Ambassador in Delhi. The Vice-President would no doubt appreciate that China had their own Jaiprakash Narayans. The difference was that the Chinese Government did not allow them to mislead the people. Mr. Chou En-lai said that the Vice-President had pointed out that China had occupied Tibet and Sinkiang. This was not correct. Sinkiang and Tibet had been part of China all along for many centuries. He said that if China was accused of occupying Tibet and Sinkiang, then they could say that India occupied Kashmir. To this the Vice-President replied that this was not correct at all. Kashmir had been a part of India

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from the earliest times. He quoted a stanza from the Mahabharata to prove this. Throughout history Kashmir had been a part of India. So there could be no comparison of Kashmir with Sinkiang and Tibet, which had been taken over only recently.

The Vice-President concluded that all these problems could be settled in a spirit of mutual accommodation and friendship.

The Chinese Prime Minister repeated that China had no claims south of the MacMahon Line.