

May 14, 1954
**Minutes of Conversation between Zhou Enlai and
Anthony Eden**

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Summary:

Zhou Enlai and Anthony Eden discuss Geneva Conference proceedings related to the Korea and Indochina issues. Zhou expresses concerns for the French proposal on Indochina and states that China supports the North Vietnamese proposal. Zhou and Eden agree that a military armistice should be decided on, although they disagree on specific issues surrounding an armistice.

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

Location: Premier Zhou's Residence

British Participants: Anthony Eden, [British Deputy Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs for Administration] Harold Caccia, William D. Allen, [British Chargé d'Affaires in Beijing] Humphrey Trevelyan, Ford (interpreter)

Chinese Participants: Zhou Enlai, Zhang Wentian, [PRC Foreign Ministry West European and African Affairs Department Director] Huan Xiang, [PRC Geneva Conference Delegation Chief of Translation and Interpretation] Zhang Wenjin, Pu Shouchang (interpreter)

Eden: Thank you for allowing me to come to visit you. I have not had the opportunity to talk with you. Today I came to see you before my visit with Mr. [Vyacheslav M.] Molotov, mainly to discuss with you as co-chairman how the conference should be carried on. I am more concerned with the Indochina issue. I am afraid that it is dangerous for everybody to be delivering speeches accusing each other. Therefore, I suggest that we have some restricted sessions to get down to actual negotiations. I have raised five questions. If you think these five questions are valid, then we can discuss them in the restricted sessions. If you think that these questions are not valid, I wonder whether there are other ways to conduct our talks.

Zhou Enlai: At the beginning of the conference, both sides need to state their positions. On the Korean question, if all sides have a common wish for the peaceful reunification of Korea, then the issue could be resolved peacefully. The Chinese delegation supports the proposal by [DPRK] Foreign Minister Nam Il. We are currently studying the five questions that you raised yesterday. On the Korean question, we have tried a restricted session, and we can try some more.

Eden: I'm more concerned with the Indochina question, for at least we are no longer fighting in Korea. But I agree with what you have said about trying another restricted session on the Korean question. The reason why I am concerned with the Indochina question is not because of some local problems—I'm not familiar with these problems—but because I'm afraid that the major powers would insist on their positions on the Indochina question, which would lead to international dangers.

Zhou Enlai: China has stated its opinion regarding the Indochina question. As you know, we support the proposal by Mr. Pham Van Dong, head of the delegation from the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, because we believe that the proposal is comprehensive. On the Indochina question, many people want peace, but some people want to continue the war. That would lead to dangers. On this point, Mr. Eden, you know more than I do.

Eden: So far as I know, everyone wishes that the war would cease.

Zhou Enlai: Of the five questions that you raised, we are not exactly clear about one question, and that is the one regarding the concentration of all troops on both sides in pre-determined areas. I would like to ask you to explain it.

Eden: I am willing to discuss it. Our thought is to concentrate the troops on both sides in predetermined areas so as to avoid conflicts. These areas shall be worked out by commanders-in-chief on both sides, and then approved by our conference. This is for the purpose of avoiding conflicts.

Zhou Enlai: As I have said before, the solution to the Indochina question must be fair, reasonable and honorable for both sides. We believe that in its present position, the United Kingdom could do some more work to make both sides understand that the

negotiations must be conducted on an equal basis. The current circumstances are that the other side does not think this way, and wants to impose some things on this side.

Eden: Where do you find inequality?

Zhou Enlai: In that the French have not discussed the political questions of the military armistice.

Eden: Oh, you are referring to this question. On this point, both sides have some accusations.

Zhou Enlai:

No, I am not referring to that. I meant that France had not answered Mr. Pham Van Dong's political proposal, while only recognizing Bao Dai as representing all of Vietnam and unifying Vietnam under him. This is a completely unreasonable thought.

Eden: France would like to let the members of the Associated States speak first. My understanding is that France might speak first this afternoon. We hope to achieve military armistice first and then discuss the political questions. Perhaps military armistice can be the first practical question to be discussed in the restricted sessions. The restricted sessions perhaps could be held next week, for the general debate will be continued this afternoon.

Zhou Enlai: Regarding the proposal for restricted sessions, we will have to discuss this with the Soviet and Vietnamese delegations.

Eden: Certainly, certainly.

Zhou Enlai: I would like to know what your plans are for the restricted sessions.

Eden: I am thinking that besides the heads of the delegations, the sessions would consist of only two or three advisors from each delegation. No account of the proceedings would be given to the press. We tried this method during the Berlin Conference, and it was very useful. The agreement to have the Geneva Conference was reached this way.

Zhou Enlai: I would like to add something. China wants peaceful co-existence with all of its Asian neighbors. The recent agreement that China signed with India on trade in Tibet is sufficient to demonstrate this point. In the preamble, China and India stated mutual respect for territorial sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual noninterference in internal affairs, reciprocity on an equal basis, and peaceful co-existence.

Eden: Right.

Zhou Enlai: On the Korean question, we have also proposed the withdrawal of foreign troops, including the Chinese People's Volunteer Army. Only so can peace and security be guaranteed.

Eden: I would like to say a few things as the British Foreign Secretary. We very much hope to see the four great powers, excuse me, I made a mistake. We very much hope to see the five great powers, that is, the United Kingdom, the United States, China, France, and the Soviet Union, work together to decrease international tensions and to

conduct normal negotiations. But before this can be achieved, a resolution must be reached on the Indochina question. Indochina is important in itself, but what is more important is that this question not affect the relations among the five great powers.

Zhou Enlai: China deserves the status of a great power. This is an existing fact. We are willing to work with others for world peace, particularly for peace in Asia. But I must say candidly that this must not be made a condition.

Eden: No, I am not saying that it should be made a condition at all. I am only stating my opinion regarding this question. I am worried that Ho Chi Minh might be asking too much. He might be able to get it, but if he were to do so, it would affect the relations for the great powers.

Zhou Enlai: I think that the person who is asking too much is not Ho Chi Minh but Bao Dai. In their proposal, the delegates from the State of Vietnam not only asked that Bao Dai be recognized as the only leader of Vietnam, but also that the United Nations guarantee Bao Dai's status as Vietnam's only leader after the elections. Ho Chi Minh has made no such demands.

Eden: What I was thinking just now is not the contents of the speech, but the thoughts behind the speech.

Zhou Enlai: I wonder if Mr. Eden has studied the proposal by Mr. Pham Van Dong. He mentioned in the proposal that before unification, both sides separately manage the areas currently under their respective control. This is equitable.

Eden: Our hope to concentrate the troops of both sides into determined areas means exactly this. It seems that the French proposal does not reject this point, and thus we have something in common with France on this point.

Zhou Enlai: France asked Bao Dai's representative to respond to the political section in Mr. Pham Van Dong's proposal. But his response was absurd. His response is very familiar to us. Jiang Jieshi once made such a demand: one government, one leader, one army, and the rest are all to be eliminated. I believe that Mr. Allen and Mr. Trevelyan would be fully familiar with these. But we all know how Jiang Jieshi wound up.

Eden: Our wish is to reach military armistice first, and then discuss the political issues. The question of armistice could be the first practical point for discussion in the restricted sessions.

Zhou Enlai: Political issues must be discussed along with military armistice at the same time.

Eden: I would like to thank you again for allowing me to come to visit you. If you think there is anything I can do for you, I would come to visit again.

Zhou Enlai: We welcome you. If you welcome me, I will go to visit you.

Eden: Welcome. I would also like to thank you for sending your staff to talk with Mr. Trevelyan. They had a very good talk, and they both felt satisfied.

Zhou Enlai: Mr. Trevelyan raised some questions during his talk with Mr. Huan Xiang, many of which can be resolved. In a few days, Mr. Huan Xiang will have a talk with Mr. Trevelyan again.

Eden: That would be great.

Zhou Enlai: We should both work to improve Sino-British relations.

Eden: Yes, and then we should bring other countries along, too.

Zhou Enlai: Yes! (pointing to Eden)

Eden: Right, that would be my task. Now I will go to meet with Mr. Molotov. I don't know if we can come up with some good ideas after our talk.