

June 5, 1954

**Minutes, Wang Bingnan's Meeting with Jean Chauvel
and Counselor to the French Delegation, Colonel
Jacques Guillerma**

Citation:

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Summary:

Wang and Chauvel discuss the armistice in Indochina. Wang presents China's ideas on the three part supervisory committee for the armistice. Chauvel suggests India, Burma, and Pakistan as examples of possible neutral nations to participate in the NNSC, and Wang supports the Soviet delegation's suggestions.

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

(Top Secret)

Time: 5 June 1954, 12:15 p.m. - 13:15 p.m.

Location: [Joseph] Paul-Boncour's Mansion

Chinese participants: Wang Bingnan and Dong Ningchuan (translator)

French participants: Jean Chauvel and Jacques Guillerma

Chauvel: Thank you for coming here to exchange opinions. Now I would like to discuss the current situation at the conference.

It is our opinion that the conference has not made much progress in the past several days. The discussions went around and around at the same place. We are running out of time, and we should move faster for genuine progress toward a settlement.

[French Minister of Foreign Affairs] Mr. [Georges] Bidault said to Mr. Zhou Enlai there are currently two critical issues: (1) a decision on troop regrouping areas, and (2) supervision. Regarding the regrouping issue, military representatives from both sides have held three or four meetings. The Vietnamese commanders, however, only addressed principles but not specific issues. Therefore their meetings arrived at no useful result. We are worried about this situation.

The Vietnamese delegation insisted on holding the negotiations at the local level. When Molotov made this suggestion, the French delegation agreed. We, however, think it unnecessary for the two delegations to discuss the same issue at the two different locations before any agreement on regrouping has been reached. It was a problem between France and Vietnam. But, since there is a situation at the present, I'd like to raise the issue for the Chinese delegation's attention.

Regarding the issue of supervision, we have addressed much in principle, but have not yet reached an agreement on the membership of the supervisory organization. The French delegation states that an objective neutral nation should not be impartial to the nations on both sides. A neutral nation must be one that has no special relationship with any side. Its task is to closely supervise the implementation of the settlement and correct mistakes made by either side. India may be an example. India has relations with France, the Soviet Union, and China. It, however, has not yet recognized Vietnam, and its relationship with France is not very friendly. [Chief of the Indian delegation to the United Nations] Mr. [V.K. Krishna] Menon met delegates from the three member countries of the Associated States a few days ago. It shows that Mr. Menon knows little about these three countries, and he has even raised questions as to whether they have any constitution. France, however, still considers India a neutral nation and is willing to see India play an important role in the International Supervisory Commission. France is also willing to accept other nations from Asia and Africa as neutral nations. What is China's opinion?

Wang Bingnan: In order to assist the conference in solving the problems smoothly, we agree to stay in touch and exchange our views on all aspects.

Chauvel: This is exactly what I agree to.

Wang Bingnan: We have similar concerns on the slow progress of the conference. It should have [produced] useful results at a faster pace. But the development has been delayed and is still [delayed]. The reason is that the conference has gone through unnecessary detours. This doesn't help the conference, and instead it slows the settlement development.

Mr. Chauvel mentioned the problems of military meetings and supervision. We are fully aware of that the conference made detours on these two issues.

As far as I know, at the military staff talks, the French presented the Laniel Proposal[1], like a request for the Democratic Republic of Vietnam's surrender. It shouldn't be [tabled] at all. It is said that the proposal has been withdrawn. However, it delayed the talks. In our opinion, rapid progress can be made through new, equal, and fact-based negotiations. The military staff contacts on the spot have not materialized by this point. According to experience [gained] from past conferences, military representatives should meet at Geneva and on the spot at the same time. Principles are discussed at Geneva while details are discussed at the local level. If you need to deal with the problems of badly wounded and sick prisoners, direct talks should be held on the spot. The earlier local contacts take place, the faster problems will be solved. As a neutral state, we want to see an improved relationship between the two sides through the meetings, which may normalize the relationship between the French people and the Vietnamese people.

With regard to the supervision issue, someone brought up the United Nations. They want to complicate the issues and do not really want to solve the problems. All of the parties have been debating the definition of a neutral nation. If we say a communist state is not a neutral nation, a capitalist nation cannot be a neutral state either. If so, there is no neutral nation at all in this world. When China fought against Japan in the past, the United States helped Japan with steel and iron to kill Chinese people. At that moment, the United States considered itself a neutral state. Therefore, the problem can't be defined by ideological debates. We believe that a neutral nation is a non-belligerent nation in the war and acceptable to both sides. Someone even nominated Japan. Such a proposal certainly does not help the conference.

Our suggestion is that the supervisory organization includes the following three committees: (1) a joint committee; (2) a supervisory committee of neutral nations; and (3) an international guarantee committee. Working together, the joint committee from the two sides should be responsible for an efficient implementation of a cease-fire. For example, both sides recently worked together to directly deal with the evacuation of seriously wounded soldiers from Dien Bien Phu. Even though some violations of the agreement occurred, all the problems were solved eventually. The task of the supervisory committee of neutral nations should be[:] domestically, to prevent a civil war from breaking out, and, internationally, to prevent foreign troops and materiel from being shipped into the country. Our [vision] for total supervision includes air, land, and sea. Someone said that the supervisory agreement doesn't apply to Laos and Cambodia. In our opinion, however, if it were true, the United States could establish its military bases in these countries. So their point is not very thoughtful. The task of the international guarantee committee [of the nine Geneva nations, or Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), France, Laos, the PRC, the State of Vietnam, the Soviet Union, the UK, and the USA.] should be to identify the unsolved problems that remained at the joint committee and neutral nation committee.

The nine-nation committee should have further discussions on these problems submitted by the joint and neutral committees.

Mr. Bidault proposed some solutions toward the supervision issue yesterday. We are now studying his proposal. We will deliver the Chinese delegation's response after our study.

I am in full accord with Mr. Chauvel's suggestion on speeding up the conference progress. Nevertheless, I'd like to know Mr. Chauvel's ideas about how to avoid interruptions and even regression at the conference, and how to push the conference forward practically and realistically.

Chauvel: I don't have much time now. Hopefully, [we can] continue our conversations tomorrow and the next day. In short, I want to add several points. At the military meetings, the French staff presented the Laniel Proposal. Our purpose, however, was not to make the Vietnamese accept it, but to hope that the Vietnamese would tell us

why they couldn't accept it and to let them provide detailed critiques on our proposal. Although the two sides have been fighting the war for eight years, we have no understanding of each other. Therefore, a mutual understanding is desired at the present.

We believe that the most urgent problem at the present is the composition of the Neutral Nation Supervisory Commission. If this problem can be solved, other technical problems will be dealt with easily, and the conference will make much progress. During today's conversation, I present the French opinion. At our next meeting, hopefully, Mr. Wang Bingnan can talk about China's opinion on India and other countries. A conversation may take a detour in front of fifty people, but a face-to-face conversation between two persons should be much easier for problem-solving. At least I believe so.

I must also emphasize my point on the local contact of military representatives. Although the past international agreements stated that principles were discussed at Geneva, and the details were discussed at local levels, they didn't say these meetings would begin at the same time. We still believe that an agreement of the bottom-line principles has to be reached at Geneva, before any local talk can possibly start on the spot. Anyway, Paris has already notified Saigon, asking them to promptly send the French staff to contact the Vietnamese.

Wang Bingnan: Over eight years the war has hurt feelings on both sides. A local contact may be the best way to heal the wounds and change the situation for the better.

Regarding the composition of the neutral nations commission, the Soviet Union has nominated four nations. We support the Soviet proposal. Mr. Chauvel, could you tell me about the French opinion on the other neutral nations besides India?

Chauvel: I mentioned India because it is a very typical example of a neutral nation. Among other Asian nations, for example, are Pakistan, Burma, and Indonesia. None of them has a [diplomatic] relationship with Vietnam. Besides the nations in Asia, there are only Switzerland and Sweden in Europe. They may not be willing to accept the membership. Thus, it may be a compromise proposal to invite Asian nations only to implement the supervision. It will probably guarantee a balanced stance to cope with the problems. This is what Mr. Bidault has stated at the meeting. [We are] not looking for our allied nations, but inviting the [neutral] nations that could make their own independent judgments.

[1] French Prime Minister Joseph Laniel had demanded five conditions for a ceasefire: withdrawal of all communists from Cambodia and Laos, creation of a demilitarized zone around the Red River Delta, relocation of communists in Vietnam into predetermined standing zones, removal of all Viet Minh troops in south Vietnam, and guarantees against reinforcements from abroad.