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Minutes of Chairman Mao Zedong’s Second Meeting with Nehru

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Summary:

Mao and Nehru have an extensive discussion about global affairs, the legacy of World War II, and the likelihood of another world war.

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Minutes of Chairman Mao Zedong's Second Meeting with Nehru
(not yet reviewed)

Time: 23 October 1954, 7:00 pm-9:30 pm
Place: Zhongnanhai, Yinantan
Attendants on the Chinese side: Vice Chairman Zhu [De], Vice Chairman Liu [Shaoqi], Premier Zhou [Enlai], Vice Chairwoman Song [Qingling], Vice Premier Chen [Yun], Ambassador Yuan Zhongxian, Pu Shouchang (interpreter and note taker)
Attendants on the Indian side: Pi-lai [sic], Ambassador Nedyam Raghavan, V.V. Paranjpe (interpreter)

Mao: How have the discussions between the two prime ministers been?

Nehru: I believe that Premier Zhou must have reported to you.

Mao: Have there been any quarrels?

Nehru: We have discussed many questions, and we are satisfied with the discussions.

Mao: Yes, it seems that we do not have many things to quarrel over with India. We have quarreled with the Labor Party of Britain on many issues. I had a three-hour meeting with them, and I quarreled with them for over two hours. But I am glad that we had the quarrels. They raised many suspicions and different opinions, and we also raised many different opinions. They asked one question on whether we were going to sabotage the British Labor Party. I told them that we would not and could not. If the Labor Party is to be sabotaged, it should be the matter of the working class of Britain. They also said that, according to their observations, their path is better than our path. They are socialists and we are communists, and their path is better and more effective than ours. I said that we'd better not discuss the question of effectiveness. If I must give my opinion, then, according to my observations, it is impossible for their policies to achieve the purpose of socialism. I told them, "You are imperialists." They said that they had abandoned imperialism. They also asked if we would cooperate with people like themselves. I said that it was entirely possible, although our ideologies and social systems are different. It is entirely possible for two parties and two countries to cooperate. If Churchill's party so wants, we can cooperate with it. We are also willing to cooperate with the United States, as far as the United States is willing to do so. There are many questions that we quarreled over with Atlee's Labor Party delegation. They are afraid that we have too large a population. They are afraid that we will embark on foreign aggression because we have too large a population, although they did not say this directly. I told them that I did not believe that we would not be able to resolve our problems because we had a large population. Under the conditions of the new social system and on the basis of economic development, all problems can be resolved within our own country.
Are there people in Southeast Asia who suspect that we intend to expand?

Nehru: Yes. I mentioned to the Chairman last time that suspicions do exist among Southeast Asian countries. This even existed in the past. This is because the populations of China and India spread into other countries. Southeast Asian countries, such as Indonesia, are also countries with large populations. The situation of Australia obviously is different. The suspicions of Southeast Asian countries did not come into being simply due to population concerns. They are also concerned when a country with a large population is at the same time a strong power. I think that the concerns of Southeast Asian countries are different from the concerns of European countries, and they belong to two different types. They are also suspicious of India. I once told Premier Zhou that the European countries were initiating a movement in Africa, claiming that India was to establish an empire in Africa. At present, the European imperialist powers are stubbornly remaining in Africa and, at the same time, they are

claiming that we are imperialists.

Several members of the British Labor Party delegation stopped in Delhi on their way back from Beijing. I met with them. They briefed me on their conversations with the Chairman and his colleagues.

Mao: It is very good that we talked with the British Labor Party delegation. Although we held different opinions, it is good that we have fully expressed our opinions. We warmly received them, and we showed them whatever they wanted to see. We opposed an allegation that Hitler's Germany once made. One of the allegations of Hitler's Germany and Japan was that they were "have-not" countries, and they wanted to snatch things from the "have" countries.

Nehru: Even before Hitler, during the time of the Kaiser, Germany alleged that it wanted all lands under the sun, that is, it wanted the colonies of other countries. The Kaiser even drew a cartoon to describe the "yellow peril," including a big group of Asians, mainly Chinese and Japanese, who were to invade Europe, and the Kaiser was holding a sword to defend Europe. At the time they mainly pointed to Japan.

Mao: Japan was truly the "yellow peril" in the past-quite a few years ago.

We in China need peace, a peace of at least several decades, to develop our national production and improve the people's standard of living. We do not want war. It would be very good if such an environment of peace was created. We can cooperate with anyone who supports the goal of peace. Undoubtedly, India supports it, and so do Indonesia and Burma.

I think Thailand does not believe that China would launch a massive attack against it. We want to have good relations with it, but the Thai government seems rather strange, paying no heed to us.

The Philippines says it is afraid of our aggression, yet when we expressed our wish to build good relations with it, it declined. We have indicated that since there is fear of aggression, we should become friends and issue a statement on mutual nonaggression, just as China and India have done. Again, the Philippines declined and refused to recognize the existence of China. We cannot comprehend why this is so. The only reason is that it heeds the United States and follows its tracks-it does whatever the United States says.

With respect to the United States, there is a question we did not finish discussing last time, and that is the question of war. Prime Minister Nehru has said that the United States wants war and that it wants to reap greater benefits by means of war.

Nehru: Chairman has raised several points, and I would like to turn to a discussion about them. Obviously, India, Indonesia, and Burma are all in favor of peace. This is not because peace itself is good, but because they have self-serving purposes. For these countries, peace is absolutely necessary. Otherwise, they will encounter all kinds of dangers, and it is possible that their countries might collapse. Therefore, no matter the perspective, they are urgently in need of peace. I don't think that any single European country is not actively hoping to have peace. They fear wars. And every country in Asia is like this too. As for the United States, it is difficult to give a simple answer. This is because there are different people in the United States. Undoubtedly, the majority of the American people wants peace, and even within the US government, there are many people who want peace. In the past several years, the defense sector of the United States has gained much larger influence over policymaking than in the past. In the military institutions, there are many who have war plans. However, on the civil service side, people do not want wars. The generals

of the Army and the Navy often talk openly about wars. President [Dwight] Eisenhower does not want war. But he is a weak person, and he knows nothing about politics.

I can tell Chairman a story. Five years ago, oh, no, six years ago, I met [John Foster] Dulles in Paris. At that time he was not secretary of state yet, but he wanted to become secretary of state because that was election time in the United States. However, the result of the election was that Truman won. I had a long conversation about the question of war. He said that he did not want war, but he said that because of the belligerent behavior of the Communist countries, war probably was inevitable. He then added one sentence, and it was this sentence that was interesting. He said that war could not resolve the problem, and that in the final analysis, it depended upon which system could produce the biggest "advantages." When he said this, he was comparing America's system with that of the Soviet Union. What he used were the terms used by American businessmen. What he meant was that the system that produced the biggest advantages would ultimately win the victory. He said that he deeply believed that America's system was better than that of the Soviet Union. Therefore, even Dulles believes that all depends on the system rather than on wars. It was from Dulles's mouth that this was said, so this is very interesting. If this was said by someone else, it would not be so interesting.

I think that Dulles is a big threat. He is a very narrow-minded person. He is a priest of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and he preaches, and he is most sincere. As far as the narrow meaning of this is concerned, he is honest. But he is also very stubborn and does not put himself into others' shoes. He believes that everyone should agree with his opinions. At any time it is possible, he may take dangerous steps.

I once had a discussion with Eisenhower, who at that time was not the President of the United States but the president of Columbia University. He granted me an honorary doctoral degree in literature. He told me that as a general, he had seen enough wars and that he did not want to see wars again. When he said this, he was very sincere. My impression was that he was a person who did not want war. However, he has been completely surrounded and controlled by a group of second-rate advisers. Therefore, he sometimes wants this and sometimes wants that.

Mao: Whether war can bring about benefits is a question that merits further discussion. We can examine which countries benefited from the two world wars. It can be said that the two world wars brought benefits to three categories of countries and were harmful to all other countries.

In the first category is U.S. imperialism, which benefited from the two world wars and grew.

The second category is composed of countries established after the world wars and led by the communist parties and the working class.

The third category is composed of oppressed nations and countries that are not led by the communist parties, but by patriotic organizations or parties. Countries such as India, Indonesia, Burma, Syria, and Egypt belong to this category.

To fight a war, one has to mobilize the people, subject them to tension, and teach them how to fight a war. But when the people are banded together, revolution occurs. That was the case with the Chinese revolution, and that was also the case with the Indian revolution. In India, do you call it revolution?

Nehru: Yes, we also call it revolution.

Mao: The independence of both our countries is an outcome of World War II. Had it not been for World War II, it would have been very difficult to win independence.

There are other countries that have been weakened by the war, for instance, Germany, Italy, and Japan. Among the victorious countries, Britain and France have also been weakened. In China, because Japan and Jiang Jieshi [Chiang Kai-shek] have both been weakened, we are able to stand up. Moreover, with the weakening of Britain, countries such as India, Burma, and Egypt have stood up. With the weakening of France, Ho Chi Minh and Syria have stood up. And with the weakening of the Netherlands, Indonesia has stood up.

If another war is to be waged, it is not yet known what exactly is in the minds of the U.S. military clique. Their past experience is that they benefited and grew from the two world wars, and they may hope to have even greater benefits and growth from another war. This line of thinking is based on their experience, but this is only one aspect of their past experience. The other aspect is that a number of countries were founded after the two world wars-countries led by communist parties or patriotic parties. If a new world war is launched, I do not know whether or not the United States can necessarily benefit from it, and problems may emerge in the United States itself. If another war is fought, the bulk or whole of West Asia and Africa and the whole of Latin America will shake off imperialism.

The people's revolutionary forces emerge only when the time is opportune. If an opportunity had not been provided for the Bolsheviks by World War I, the Russian October Revolution would have encountered difficulties. In China, we had fought for twenty-two years, yet not until the final few years did we achieve victory. Not until the end of World War II did we have the opportunity to stand up. These cases involve countries led by communist parties.

As for countries led by patriotic parties, we can see instances in Southeast and West Asia. People tend to hold differing views. But in my mind, it will not pay for the United States to fight another big war, as that will plunge the whole world or a greater part of the world into a state of revolution. It is not an alarmist talk when I say so; it is based on the actual state of affairs following the two world wars. If another world war is unleashed, I don't think the United States can gain any benefits, and the war can diminish the areas under U.S. domination.

With respect to weaponry, the United States thinks that since it has the atomic bomb, heavy artillery, and a strong navy and air force, it can rely on them. In my view, though there have been changes in weaponry, apart from inflicting more casualties, there is no fundamental difference. In ancient times, cold weapons such as swords and spears were used. Then hot weapons, such as rifles, machine-guns, artilleries, etc., were used. Now the atomic bomb has been added. The basic difference is that cold weapons inflicted fewer casualties, hot weapons more, and the atomic bomb even more. There has been no difference except in the number of casualties. In the past, both belligerent parties had cold and hot weapons in their possession, and now both the Soviet Union and the United States have atomic bombs. The change in weaponry can inflict greater numbers of casualties-that is all. What were the casualties of the First World War?

Nehru: About 30 million.

Mao: How about the Second World War?

Nehru: It is difficult to give the exact number, but, in any case, it is much larger than that of the First World War.

Mao: If a third world war is fought, the number of casualties will not be tens of millions, but hundreds of millions. China so far has no atomic bombs, and I do not know whether India has them. We have begun research in this respect, yet building the atomic bomb requires financial input. We may not have one for some time to come.

If a third world war is fought, casualties will be inflicted on both sides. That will strike a balance between the two sides. The ultimate factor deciding the outcome of a war will remain men-who handles the weapons, what the soldiers wielding the weapons regard as most advantageous, and who is better at fighting, etc. The first two elements are of primary importance.

With regard to the quantity of weapons, both the Congress Party of India and the Communist Party of China had no weapons at the very beginning, but now both of us have them.

Another point comes from experience. In both world wars the defenders succeeded and the attackers were defeated. In World War I, the German armed forces advanced to Paris in the west and approached Petrograd in the east. But in the end the invaders failed. In World War II, the attackers, Germany, Italy, and Japan, were all defeated, and the defensive side won victory, though some countries on the side of the defense, such as Britain and France, were weakened by the war.

We can thus draw the conclusion that another world war should not be fought, and lasting peace should be maintained. The outcome of another world war will not be in the interest of the aggressors.

Nehru: I am very grateful to the Chairman, who has given an analysis of the consequences of wars in the past and their current status. The Chairman is an expert in this respect and, therefore, your views deserve my greatest respect. I am in agreement with the Chairman on most of the points and only have reservations on a few points.

I venture to raise a point, that is, even without the Second World War, India would have still attained independence. As a matter of fact, when the Second World War began, India already had almost attained independence. Our movement had made it next to impossible for Britain's reign to continue. However, the Second World War provided Britain with a pick-axe, and its reign lasted for a longer time in India.

The United States benefited from wars in the past. The benefits that it has gained are of two folds, the positive and the negative folds. The negative benefits were that some other countries had been weakened. The positive benefits were that its industry achieved development. But the situation after the war was not what the United States wanted to see. If the United States had benefited from the war, then the Soviet Union also had benefited from the war. So, there was a balance there. Although the United States became stronger, it was facing increasingly more difficult problems.

I venture to present a point. The conclusion that can be drawn from the Chairman's argument is that although wars are bad and, therefore, should be avoided, wars can [also] bring about good results, so they could be welcomed.

As far as the question of weaponry is concerned, I also have some disagreement. The changes of weaponry are not only a matter of quantity but one of quality, and this should not be measured simply by the difference in numbers of casualties. I agree that the United States will not benefit from another war, but other countries will not benefit from another war either. I am not an expert of weapons. But I am a kind of scientist, and I am chairing India's committee on atomic energy use. I have studied

the new developments in most European countries. If a war breaks out, in a matter of a few weeks, it will result in the destruction of the administrative, military, and industrial centers of both sides. America thinks that when the war comes, they can destroy every administrative, military, and industrial center of the Soviet Union by using the atomic bomb and the hydrogen bomb. But when America executes the destruction, the Soviets will not stand there and do nothing-they will also commit destructive actions.

I agree that in the final analysis, human beings count. But I also would like to raise this point: Another war, in addition to bringing about all kinds of changes that several previous wars had brought about, will also cause extraordinary destruction. It is very possible that colonial powers will be weakened or even destroyed. But all over the world there will be extreme chaos, and there will be the need for reconstruction. If all of those highly trained persons have been killed, then everything needs to be done from scratch. Therefore, from a practical point of view, the new war will be quite different from any of the previous wars, and its consequences cannot be predicted or controlled. Once the war breaks out, it is possible that all organized governments will be destroyed, and in the end, no one will be able to even stand forward to make peace, and the war will go on continuously.

Of course, all of this is guesswork. But nuclear weapons have made all of this possible. It is possible that countries like China and India would suffer lighter destruction. The highly industrialized countries would suffer more, since their nerve centers would all be destroyed.

There is another aspect to be considered. The result of the war could make the human race more brutal. Sometimes the result of a war is good, such as leading to people's liberation and testing people's capacities for endurance. But it can also cause human beings to become more brutal and thus downgraded.

Therefore, on every count, war has to be avoided by every possible effort. The Chairman is right when he says that in the two world wars in the past, the aggressors were defeated. Yet, in reviewing the two wars, we may also see that with a little twist in the situation, the aggressor could have won. Hitler was a very foolish person, and he lost many opportunities. If he had been more calm, more patient, and more wise, his opportunities could have been better. In the First World War, Germany was defeated. But this was not certain until the last minute. Therefore, whether the aggressor will be defeated in a future war is not a matter of certainty.

There are many forces at work in the world. Some of them are exaggerated by war, and some of them are functioning even without war. Today, imperialist countries in Europe, such as Britain and France, are dying. By themselves, they no longer have the strength to exist continuously. After the First World War, France was no longer a great power. And after the Second World War, Britain was no longer a great power. But for the United States, as a new type of imperialist country, the situation is different. I believe that European imperialist countries have lost the capacity to exist continuously. Other forces have risen to oppose them.

Mao: They are not powerful imperialist countries any more. But they still are in possession of colonies and semi-colonies.

Nehru: That is correct. But the sources of their strength are exhausted.

Mao: Yes, they are weakened.

Nehru: Not just weakened. The colonies are rising to oppose them, and they are no longer in a position to control the colonies. The only place they still are able to control

is Africa.

Mao: Is Egypt still under the control of Britain?

Nehru: No, the influence of the United States is larger than that of Britain.

Mao: Although our analyses are similar in some areas and different in others, we have reached an identical conclusion. In analyzing the United States, Prime Minister Nehru has said that, on the one hand, the United States has benefited from the war, but on the other hand, it has encountered difficulties. This is a very good analysis. As for the instruments of warfare, we can roughly identify three stages, namely, arrows and spears, then artillery, and then atomic bombs. Prime Minister Nehru says that these weapons differ in quality. That is true. When I talked about weaponry just now, I was only referring to the outcome of wars.

Whatever weapons are used, in whatever period of time a war is fought, and regardless of whether it is local or global in scale, the outcome of wars is always one side destroys the other. Of course, there are also wars that end in a draw and a kind of peace, such as the wars relating to the 38th Parallel [in Korea] and the 17th Parallel [in Indochina]. In these wars, no party fundamentally defeated another party. In the majority of cases, however, there invariably exists a winning side and a losing side, with the latter's strength destroyed to a greater extent. By strength, I mean not only effective strength but also material strength. Therefore, in the final analysis, victory is determined by the extent to which overall strength has been destroyed.

Nehru: I do not know the exact facts. But I would like to raise one point to get the Chairman's advice. As far as the scope and extent of destruction are concerned, the losses of the Soviet Union were the largest during the last war, much larger than any other European country. Still, due to the Soviet Union's enduring strength, it finally won the victory.

Mao: Here I am referring to the final outcome of wars. The outcome of World War II was that all German armed forces were annihilated, while the armed forces of the Soviet Union, instead of being destroyed, fought on to Berlin. All the forces of Germany, Italy, and Japan were disarmed. Prime Minister Nehru's perception is that a third world war would plunge the whole world into a period of chaos. That is possible. Atomic bombs will bring destruction not only to human beings, but also to material things. Will many countries be devoid of governments? I do not think so. As long as human beings survive, there will be governments. When one government is destroyed, another will come into being. Human beings invariably will find a way out, and those who survive will try to live on. It also has to be taken into account that people today have changed a great deal from people of the past, and their consciousness for winning liberation and independence has been enhanced enormously. This is the case with all countries, including the United States.

In a word, it is best that no wars are fought. If we could act as chief-of-staff for Eisenhower, he would listen to us instead of being besieged by his advisers. Prime Minister Nehru is in a better position than us to do this work. If we are to do it, Eisenhower will say that we are frightening him with revolution and that he is not afraid of revolution.

Nehru: Yes. But we cannot directly influence America, although we may be able to influence America through those countries that may influence America, such as Britain and Canada. Probably, we may exert some of our influence through France.

Not long before I came to China, I received a short message from [Winston] Churchill in which he said that he was anxious to curb the tendencies towards war, and he was

trying his best to work on some in America. He said he hoped that China would be admitted to the United Nations.

Mao: I think that not only war, but even a tense situation will benefit and at the same time harm those who create tension. I wish to ask, which is more advantageous-to let people feel safe, or to make people live in tension every day? A tense situation would awaken the people and make them prepare to resist pressure. That is conducive to revolution.

Evidently, there is no tension between China and India. Our two countries do not wage psychological warfare, nor are we on the alert against each other-unlike the state of affairs between China and the United States and between the Soviet Union and the United States.

Nehru: In the United States, many in the government, and especially those with the military, have advanced such a point that they do not want war, but they must keep up the tension; otherwise, the Congress will not sanction money for the military. Therefore, they talk about wars, so that they will receive a large amount of money for the continuous expansion of the army, the navy, and the air force.

Mao: That is only one advantage that they receive. In the meantime, they are also making other countries intimidated so that those countries will follow them. By doing so, the United States can not only build and expand military bases, but also increase military orders. For this purpose, they are making the outcries that the world situation is tense and that the Communists are doing the killings. Their purpose is not restricted to domestic appropriations.

What does Prime Minister Nehru think about convening a World Peace Congress in the near future? All the nations of the world may participate, and a sort of world treaty for non-aggression may be signed which may establish that no war should be fought in several decades.

Nehru: This is difficult to say. But with every passing year, the possibility of war is decreasing. My guess is that if fifteen years pass without a war, the possibility of war will be very remote. Not that it is the people who will have changed, but the weapons will have developed to such an extent that nobody dares to use them. Eventually, the time may come when the adjustment of the world will be achieved through mutual adjustment.

Mao: Before the adjustment of the world is achieved, is it possible that no war will happen in ten years?

Nehru: What I have said is that the possibility of war will get smaller, not that war will not necessarily happen. The reason for the decreasing possibility of war lies in fears over the consequences of wars as the people know more about the destructiveness of weapons. After fifteen years, the development of weapons will reach such an extent that no one dares to use them for war. Eventually, people will understand that if a war breaks out, it will mean the destruction of both sides. Of course, I am not giving any assurance.

Mao: Yes, we cannot give any assurance about what they are doing.

Nehru: What we have just discussed are matters between states and states. If a kind of death ray is invented, then even a small group of bad guys can bring about huge destruction.

Mao: When that day arrives, one possesses the weapon by himself, but he is afraid of the weapon, and he is also afraid that others are in possession of the same weapon. In addition, he is probably also afraid of revolution, both national revolution and social revolution.

Nehru: Of course. Now the sciences have achieved great development. The Chairman probably has heard of a type of guided missile. Today, there is a machine that can control it. There is also a machine that plays chess. Therefore, a machine might be created to fight, and it might be able to do the fighting more effectively than humans. As science advances, it may allow a small group of bad guys to command enormous destructive power.

Mao: In the final analysis, we should make joint efforts to prevent war and to preserve a lasting peace.

Prime Minister Nehru has been in China a few days already. He must have learned about our situation. We are now carrying out the Five-Year Plan, and our socialist transformation has just begun. If a war should break out, our entire plan would be upset. We have put all our funds in reconstruction. If a war should break out, our economic and cultural plans would have to come to a halt, and a war plan would have to be drawn up to cope with the war. That would delay the process of China's industrialization. However, it would be difficult to destroy China completely or sink China to the ocean floor through bombardment. The same is true for India. The Chinese people will also live on forever. Tens of millions of years ago, there was a giant animal, namely, the dinosaur, which became extinct in the glacial age. Later, however, other animals emerged, and finally the human race came into being, though relics of the glacial age can be seen in China even now. Can it also be seen in India?

Nehru: Yes. From a geological perspective, India is a new country. The Himalayas are also a new mountain.

(At this time, Premier Zhou Enlai proposes to end the meeting to attend the banquet.)

Nehru: I am very interested in geology. I even earned a degree related to geology.

Mao: Now one of the prime ministers of our two countries has raised opposition to our continuing the conversation. Our conversation can end now.