

October 19, 1954

Minutes of Chairman Mao Zedong's First Meeting with Nehru

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Summary:

Mao Zedong and Nehru discuss Sino-Indian relations, the political situation in Asia, and the role of the United States in world politics.

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Minutes of Chairman Mao Zedong's First Meeting with Nehru
(Not Yet Approved)

Time: 19 October 1954, 4:30 pm-5:30 pm

Place: Zhongnanhai, Qinzhengdian

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

Attendant on the Indian side: Ambassador Nedyam Raghavan

Nehru: I am very happy to visit China. This makes me very happy. I have hoped for the coming of this day for a long time.

Mao: We welcome you, we warmly welcome you.

Nehru: Thanks. After I arrived in Beijing, I was welcomed by the great masses. I am greatly moved.

Mao: Historically, all of us, people of the East, have been bullied by Western imperialist powers. Although Japan is located in the East, it was also an imperialist power that bullied other countries of the East. Now, however, even Japan is being bullied. China was bullied by Western imperialist powers for over one hundred years. Your country was bullied even longer, for more than three hundred years. Now the Japanese people are also being oppressed. Therefore, we, people of the East, have instinctive feelings of solidarity and protecting ourselves. Ambassador Raghavan has served in China for a few years, and he surely understands the Chinese people's patriotism and their feelings for the Indian people and the people of other countries in the East. In spite of differences in our ideologies and social systems, we have an overriding common point, that is, all of us have to cope with imperialism. Prime Minister Nehru should not think that China has attained complete independence and has no problems. We still face very big problems. Taiwan is still in the hands of the United States and Jiang Jieshi [Chiang Kai-shek]. We have over thirty islands that are only a few kilometers off the coast of our mainland, and three of them are fairly big. These islands are all occupied by the forces of the United States and Jiang Jieshi so that our vessels cannot pass through, nor can foreign vessels. American airplanes fly to the air space over our interior and air-drop special agents. These special agents form groups of seven to ten persons and are equipped with radio sets. Recently, scores of such groups of special agents have been air-dropped in our interior provinces. In Sichuan Province and parts of Qinghai adjacent to Tibet, American airplanes have air-dropped not only special agents, but also weapons to aid the bandits there. All this shows that a small number of people in the US authorities are bent on harming us whenever they have the opportunity to do so.

In addition, as Prime Minister Nehru knows, China is not an industrialized country, but an agricultural country. The level of our industrial development is lower than that of India. It will take us another ten to twenty years [of] effort to achieve some tangible results. At present the imperialist powers still look down upon us. Our two countries are in a similar situation, and this is the common situation of countries of the East. I have read Prime Minister Nehru's speech from the 29th of last month and found [that] the sentiments he expressed are similar to ours.

Prime Minister Nehru should have some rest. You must be very tired after a long journey.

Nehru: Chairman, thank you very much for sharing with us your opinions about our two countries and the general situation. You are absolutely right in saying that over the past two hundred years, our two countries and many other countries in Asia have suffered from the oppression and domination of foreign colonial powers. This has been the common experience shared by our two countries, and this has been the common experience shared by other Asian countries.

Asia is a big continent, and there are several big countries in Asia. China is the largest, and there are also some smaller countries. We are all under the influence of our different history. But we have a common experience, that is, we all have suffered from foreign rule. We have many things in common, and this is not just because of the connection of the past. This is also because we suffered from colonial rule in modern times, although we have had different developments in many aspects. Therefore, although we are under the influence of different conditions, we have many things in common since ancient times, and the problems we are facing now are also commonly shared by us. Chairman is right when he says that the industries of our two countries are backward. This is a situation shared by us. We both want to develop our countries in the shortest possible time. Chairman also mentions the differences in our ideologies. This is true among many Asian countries. But this is quite natural. On the other hand, however, the common features and common requests by us are also very obvious. When Premier Zhou [Enlai] visited India, he saw India's friendship with himself and with China. If Chairman is to give us such an honor and visit India himself, he will also receive a warm welcome.

Mao: The welcome shown by the peoples of our country to the leaders of our countries on mutual visits illustrates that they place emphasis on our common points rather than the differences in our ideologies and social systems.

Nehru: Yes, what they place emphasis on are the common points. They demonstrate the friendship between the peoples, and such sentiment of friendship pays no attention to the points of differences.

When Premier Zhou was in Delhi, we issued a joint communiqué, which put forward the Five Principles. In India, the Five Principles are viewed as applicable not only to the relationship between our two countries, but also to all other countries. If these principles are observed, tense situations can be greatly reduced and every country will be able to pursue development in accordance with its own wisdom [while maintaining] friendly [relations] with other countries.

Chairman mentions that the industries of our two countries are backward, and we both are eager to pursue rapid development so that the conditions of the people will be improved. Among Asian countries, China and India are the largest ones. Therefore, our two countries should play more important roles in Asia. In any case, the population of our two countries reaches one billion. This will lead to immense influence.

Mao: But the United States does not recognize our two countries as great powers. They say that our two countries are small countries.

Nehru: The ruler that the United States uses to measure other countries will no longer be useful in the future. In addition to money, there are other factors. The human factor is the most important, and those who have a clear understanding of their future should not overlook it.

Mao: Yes, the most important is the human factor.

Nehru: The contact and relationship between China and India are of great importance

to Asia and the world. Those smaller countries in Asia are even more backward. They know their own weaknesses, therefore they are afraid. On the one hand, they do not like imperialism. On the other hand, they fear bigger countries such as China and India.

Mao: Do they fear the communist parties?

Nehru: This is difficult to analyze. First, they fear big countries; second, if a big country is also very powerful, they fear the big country's power; third, some countries among them also fear the activities of the communist parties, and this is because they believe that behind these activities is the support of big countries. If the Five Principles are carried out, it will help reduce their fear.

Mao: Application of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence should be extended to the state-to-state relations among all countries. As Prime Minister Nehru pointed out in his speech on the 29th of last month, countries should be committed to Five Principles and assume obligations accordingly. If a country says one thing but acts otherwise, it is justifiable to criticize that country which is in the wrong in the eyes of the people. The problem is that some big powers refuse to commit themselves to or conclude agreements on the Five Principles as our two countries have done. No one knows what they have in mind. To my knowledge, the United States and Britain also say that they want peace and will not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries. However, if we want to issue a statement with them in accordance with the Five Principles, they are unwilling to do so.

Nehru: This is correct. I cannot tell either what are in their minds. Big countries can also be the countries with fear. A person with fear is a person likely to commit mistakes in action.

Mao: Are they really afraid?

Nehru: Yes. Several big powers in Europe have been greatly weakened than in the past. They cannot see what they will have in the future. European imperialist countries are still playing a role, but they are getting weaker day after day and cannot sustain [themselves] for very long. In comparison, the United States is more powerful. However, anyone who has been to the United States knows how much the United States is afraid. Although the United States is very powerful militarily and financially, it fears losing its position.

Mao: It is inconceivable that any country would march its troops into the United States. It is alleged that the United States fears losing the places it has occupied in various parts of the world. However, I seem to have heard that the United States is against British and French colonialism.

Nehru: The United States is a big country as far as its territorial size and population are concerned. Therefore, it is difficult to say that the whole [of] America will have an identical idea. Some Americans are against British and French colonialism, and it is still like this today.

The United States fears that its vested interests will be harmed. Like all people with vested interests, the United States is nervous and afraid. Therefore, it wants to defend its vested interests.

Mao: The alleged US fear is truly excessive. It has advanced its defense lines to South Korea, Taiwan, and Indochina, which are so far away from the United States and so close to us. This makes our sleep unsound.

Nehru: Yes.

Mao: This has made it difficult for us to have a sound sleep.

Nehru: There have been some changes in the past several years that have changed the whole situation of Asia and the relations between Asia, Europe and America. It is difficult for some countries to understand all of this. But some countries in Europe are smarter, although not smart enough. They begin to understand these changes. The United States is not mature. It is very difficult for the United States to understand the many things that it dislikes and, at the same time, are happening in the world.

Mao: In its behavior, the United States does not care whether others can tolerate them. For instance, in putting together the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization [SEATO], it did not bother to consult China and India. There are many countries in Asia, yet it consulted only three countries, Pakistan, Thailand, and the Philippines. The United States does not care whether others can tolerate them.

Nehru: The United States invited India to attend the Manila conference, but India turned down the invitation. Yes, if the United States is determined to do something, it does not care whether others can tolerate it.

SEATO is America's reaction against the Geneva Agreements. The United States did not like these agreements. It does this because it wants to demonstrate that its views still count and that it still can influence policies [in Asia].

Mao: This is quite right. The Geneva Conference did some good things, so the United States tried to sabotage it.

Nehru: The European countries that have joined SEATO do not necessarily like it. But they dare not say "no" under the pressure of the United States.

Mao: Anthony Eden proposed that a Locarno Pact for Asia be concluded. Later on, however, he gave up the idea and accepted SEATO instead. Such a big power should not have been so timid. Our two countries are not afraid. When the United States invited India to the Manila conference, India had the courage to stay away. On the question of restoration of China's status in the United Nations, India has the courage to cast an affirmative vote, while such big powers like Britain and France are so timid. Let us propose that they hand over their big-power status to us, all right?

Nehru: The status of big power is not something that can be granted or given. The non-recognition attitude does not matter, and this cannot last. Gandhi has taught us that we should not have fear. In the past, although we did not have the weapons to fight against the British, we were still not afraid of them. Although we are not powerful, we are not afraid of another country. Such an attitude on our part offends other countries. This is because even some big powers are followers [of others], and we dared to say "no."

Mao: Britain often asserts that it is China that does not recognize Britain, but we have told them that it is Britain that does not recognize China. We have advised Britain to follow the example of India, and if that is done, Britain can establish formal diplomatic relations with China. Some Scandinavian countries, for example, Norway, also had the courage to vote for restoration of China's status in the United Nations; we have therefore established formal diplomatic relations with Norway.

Nehru: I think among all countries in the United Nations, except for the United States, not a single one thinks that the People's Republic of China should not have its

representative at the United Nations. Of course, some countries dare not act in accordance with their own ideas, but they say so privately.

Mao: I have a question. Australia has expressed fear about us, alleging that Communists will commit aggression against it. But we do not even have the ships-how can we reach there? In joining the Manila Pact, Australia asserted that it was for defense purposes. However, when we proposed to that country an agreement on the Five Principles, on mutual nonaggression and noninterference, Australia declined.

I have two points of doubt:

First, the United States is shouting anti-communist slogans, and it is in fact opposed to the communist parties. But is it really afraid of the Chinese Communist Party? China only has a few worn-out guns; what we have are only people, farming and handicrafts. As I can see, the United States is not really afraid of the Chinese Communist Party, but is using this as a pretext for ulterior purposes.

Second, why is it that countries like Britain, France, and Australia follow the United States, while India, Indonesia, Burma, and some Scandinavian countries do not necessarily follow the United States? I think this is because countries like Britain, France, and Australia have tied their interests to the American locomotive, and they have to obey when the United States issues an order, whereas India, Indonesia, Burma, and some Scandinavian countries have not tied their interests to the American locomotive, or have only loose ties, so these countries do not have to follow the United States.

Nehru: It is difficult to know about one's intention. I know that the people and governments of Britain and France are often unhappy with America's pressure. In Arabic countries in West Asia, the interests of the United States and Britain are also not without contradictions. The United States is excluding the interests of Britain, and Britain is unhappy about this. But Britain is afraid that once the war breaks out, it will be in an isolated position and overwhelmed by the Soviet Union. Therefore, Britain has to depend on the United States for protection. However, under the current circumstance, if a war is to break out, for the majority of the involved it means total destruction. War is no longer a useable instrument for achieving policy goals. The whole of Europe is against war, and Britain in particular.

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Mao: If there is the opportunity, I would like to discuss with Prime Minister the question about whether war as an instrument of policy goals is advantageous or not. The two world wars have proven that damage is much greater than the advantages. If a war is to happen again, what will happen? I would like to have another opportunity to discuss this with you.

Nehru: I am very glad to have another opportunity to talk to you. Of course I would like to see different aspects of China, and especially China's new developments. I would also like to visit China's historical sites. But the main purpose of my visit to China is not sightseeing, but meetings with Chairman and his colleagues.