

October 19, 1954

Minutes of the First Meeting between Premier Zhou Enlai and Nehru

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Summary:

Zhou Enlai and Nehru discuss French and Portuguese colonialism in India and China, the Sino-American conflict, conflict in the Taiwan Straits, and the China issue at the United Nations.

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Minutes of the First Meeting between Premier Zhou Enlai and Nehru
(Unverified)

Time and Date: 19 October 1954, 7:00 pm to 11:30 pm

Venue: Xihua Hall, Zhongnanhai

Interpreted and Recorded by Pu Shouchang

Nehru: I have received a piece of news. Yesterday, the parliament of the French territory in India held a vote. One-hundred-forty-eight members of the parliament voted in favor of Indian independence, while eight members voted against it. Prior to that, India had reached an agreement with France, but France insisted that they go through a legal procedure like a vote. In about a week, India can sign a treaty with France, and in ten days, India can take over the regions held by France.

Zhou: Great. This is another good deed of the French cabinet.

Nehru: This has been made possible for two reasons: First, the economic situation of the French territory is extremely difficult as most material supplies have been cut off, and almost half of the region is virtually in a semi-blockaded state. And second, the French cabinet has resolved this issue.

Zhou: What is the situation in Goa?

Nehru: Not much has changed. What is the situation in Macao?

Zhou: It is the same. The only difference is that Portugal has diplomatic relations with India, but not with us.

Nehru: Although Portugal has diplomatic relations with India, India has recalled the diplomatic representative in Portugal. Portugal's diplomatic representative remains in Delhi.

When the Portuguese first arrived in Goa, they introduced extremely ruthless methods. Like what had happened in European countries, the Catholics and Christians carried out brutal slaughters. Many people in Goa were forcibly converted to Catholicism.

(Nehru went on to talk about the various regions in India. Details omitted.)

Chairman Mao said this afternoon that America has air-dropped special agents into China. How is this situation?

Zhou: Most of the special agents are Chinese, but they have been trained by America. Most of the special agents have been selected from Taiwan; some have been selected from Chinese prisoners of war [POWs] taken during the Korean War.

Nehru: Did the American planes fly in Chinese airspace?

Zhou: Yes. The planes flew at high altitudes. Most of them were four-engine B-29 aircrafts.

Nehru: Were there many intrusions?

Zhou: There have been many intrusions since the end of the Korean War, but they have become less frequent this year. We have conducted a count. We can send you a copy.

This afternoon Chairman Mao mentioned the provinces over which American planes flew. One of the provinces is Qinghai. In the past, there were some bandits fighting us in this province. As such, America air-dropped radios to these bandits in order to establish contact, and some weapons, such as machine guns and ammunitions, were also air-dropped. Special agents were air-dropped as well. America did not stop air-dropping until they had wiped out these bandits.

America has also air-dropped special agents into the forests in our country. We have captured some of them.

Among these special agents, thirteen are American. We are going to make an announcement soon.

Nehru: When did you capture these American special agents?

Zhou: The year before last.

Nehru: How is the situation on Jinmen [Quemoy] Island?

Zhou: Some days ago, Jiang Jieshi [Chiang Kai-shek] bombarded Xiamen from the air and by artillery on the island. We counterattacked by artillery. Lately, the situation has not changed much. It is just that the bombardment has become less frequent. Yesterday, Jiang Jieshi's aircrafts again flew over Xiamen, but did not drop any bombs.

Nehru: What do you think their purposes are, Mr. Premier?

Zhou: Since the armistice in Korea last year and especially since peace was restored in Indochina, they have been using the outlying islands to carry out disruptive and sabotaging warfare. They know that if they send troops to the mainland, they will get annihilated. Thus, they are carrying out disruptive and sabotaging warfare; they hit and run. They carry out looting, arson, and killing. They control the Taiwan Strait, preventing our ships from going through the waters off the coasts of Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, and Guangdong provinces. Foreign ships passing through the waters also face the risk of being impounded, and therefore have to take detours through the waters east of Taiwan. For this reason, many foreign ships do not come because freights are too high. They have various purposes. First, they are using disruptive and sabotaging warfare to cooperate with the sabotage carried out by the air-dropped special agents on the mainland. Second, they want to disrupt our sea transportation. Third, they want to cut off our trade with foreign countries. They are attempting to take advantage of all this to create a tense situation. This is America's policy of threat. After the Korean armistice and the restoration of peace in Indochina, America wants to expand its aggression, train Jiang Jieshi's troops, and make preparations for expanding the war.

Nehru: Clearly, their activities are aimed at causing disruption and inflicting harm. Mr. Premier, do you think this is a prelude to America's attempt or plan to launch a major war, or is it just to cause disruption with no intent of a major war?

Zhou: Let me put it this way. The disruptive and sabotaging warfare today is intended for a bigger war tomorrow, but we cannot say that what is going on today is the prelude. However, if we do not block, oppose, and strike this disruptive and

sabotaging warfare, it will expand day by day to the point that we cannot distinguish the above two stages. In China, there is a saying-"Give him an inch, and he will take a foot." If this happened, the disruptive and sabotaging warfare would expand.

Nehru: Mr. Premier, is America deliberately provoking the Chinese government into some action in order to get an opportunity to expand its military operations?

Zhou: America does not want to instigate a major war right away; rather, they are testing the waters to find out if we are prepared and if we have the strength. At the same time, they are giving Jiang Jieshi's forces a boost. Jiang Jieshi's forces are aging, and his troops on the islands are also exhausted. Therefore, America's instigation of disruptive and sabotaging warfare has given Jiang Jieshi's forces a boost; otherwise, Jiang Jieshi may face an internal change, and his forces may completely lose their combat abilities. But the boost America has given to Jiang Jieshi's forces has created another problem; that is, after getting the boost, Jiang Jieshi's forces want to expand the war, attack the mainland, and instigate a major war. But this conflicts with American intents, as America today has no plans to wage a major war. What will happen tomorrow will be a different story.

Under such circumstances, we are supposed to put forward our proper proposition and prove that we are prepared and will not tolerate aggression. We have full justification to liberate Taiwan. We will not tolerate aggression; we will not tolerate disruption of our marine transport and our foreign trade being cutoff; we will not tolerate a "neutralized" Taiwan, "international control," etc. Therefore, we have taken the initiative to bring up the issue. Otherwise, America will not only use Jiang Jieshi to wage disruptive and sabotaging warfare, but also hatch other plots around the world in order to keep its tight grips on Taiwan.

Nehru: Undoubtedly, as far as Taiwan is concerned, both the legal basis and the historic basis are favorable to the Chinese government. Previously, I thought that after experiencing the Korean War, America did not need any further evidence of China's strength to resist.

This is a rather difficult issue-how to cope with the current situation without triggering a major war.

Zhou: How do you look at the situation in the Far East and the world?

Nehru: As I have just said, on the Taiwan issue, the legal basis is on the Chinese side. This is quite clear. The current issue is a practical issue, that is, how to deal with the current situation. You're right-America has no plan for a major war, but there are all sorts of people in America; some of them often want war, while others do not. Those who want war can find a pretext to get others to become involved in the war. The American government is weak now as it is wavering under pressure from all sides. For example, the China Lobby is a powerful group. Groups like this can affect the result of the election. On one hand, we should not fall into the trap of the war hawks; on the other hand, it is difficult to keep silent and be submissive to what is going on. This is a difficult situation, and I cannot give any opinion. I just hope that the situation will not escalate into a major war as it would be catastrophic to all people concerned, and it would mean falling into the trap of American warmongers.

Copies of the telegram you sent to the United Nations [UN] Secretary-General have been distributed at the UN, and the Soviet delegation has recently proposed a motion. I do not know at which organization the motion will be discussed. If the motion is tabled for discussion, it will definitely fail. This is because the motion condemns America, and few countries are willing to directly condemn America. Rejecting this motion will allow America to directly obtain support. However, I am not

quite sure how the matter will evolve at the UN.

I have been told that regarding China's admission to the UN, if the idea had been put forward in the final stage of the current General Assembly, there would have been hope of success, but it was put forward in the early stage of the General Assembly before all preparations had been made; thus, it failed.

Zhou: Since Prime Minister Nehru mentioned the international situation, I also want to say something about our position. First, during our talk four months ago, we said that our policy was aimed at international peace and cooperation. We will do everything we can to fight for peace. We have reiterated that the peace and cooperation we talk about do not exclude any country, even America, as long as these countries have the same wish. Second, we must make it clear that we will not tolerate any bullying. But America not only refuses to recognize us, but also air-drops special agents and uses Jiang Jieshi to carry out disruptive and sabotaging warfare along our coast, disrupting our marine transport and cutting off our international trade. As such, we have to make a call of justice and propose to liberate Taiwan. If America continues provoking and bullying us, we will definitely resist. As Prime Minister Nehru said to Chairman Mao this afternoon, we are not afraid of threats either. Third, we will never engage in provocation; we have no intent to instigate a world war as it would run counter to our policy stated in the first point. On one hand, we want to liberate Taiwan; on the other hand, we will be very cautious if we were to take any action.

Regarding the two points made by Prime Minister Nehru about the UN, I also want to say something. The charge we filed at the UN is just. It is not going to produce any results given the current situation at the UN. We do not expect any result. We just want to find out how much response we can get from our call of justice. Whether a world war will be waged or not does not depend on the UN, but on America. Whether the motion will get passed at the UN also depends on whether America will approve it or not. I am not quite sure how the Soviet Union's motion will be resolved, but China is in the right. So, we want to see who in these countries sympathize with justice. This will be a test of all countries. On the other hand, if America uses the Taiwan question to mobilize other countries to wage a major war together, it will definitely fail because America has no justification on the Taiwan question. Therefore, there is no justification to go into a major war along with America for the sake of Taiwan. But we have to be prepared. If America uses Taiwan and the outlying islands to attack the mainland, we will resist, and we are ready to fight with our lives.

Regarding China's legal status at the UN, it is not a question open to discussion. However, as long as America opposes it, we can never get in. Therefore, regardless of how early or late the idea is proposed, it is not going to get passed now. But this issue is also a test of the countries that recognize China. Although they are fully aware that it will not get passed, they do not dare express their position. This is not something we will accept. Whether it is in the current general assembly or the next one, as long as America opposes it, no other country can do anything about it, because most countries are following America or simply do not dare go against America.

Nehru: Thank you for giving me a full explanation of your viewpoints. I would like to talk about the last issue, that is, China's status at the UN.

I agree that this issue should be brought up from time to time, even if it will not be passed considering the current situation. My only concern is how it is brought up. If the issue is brought up for the purpose of gaining something, then no country should be put in a position that goes against their will. The differences of practice have something to do with the matter in question. We agree that this issue should be brought up from time to time. It is right to bring up the issue this year. I just feel that maybe it should have been brought up at a later date, but anyway this is only a question of tactics, not a question of principles.

I completely agree with most of what you have said. On one hand, it is not necessary for me to reiterate that the legal, logical and historical basis is in favor of China on the Taiwan question. Three or four years ago, even the American government said so. On the other hand, no country would accept bullying; even small countries would not, let alone big countries. Any country would give up their rights and claims just because they are threatened. You said that China will not do anything that runs counter to its purposes of peace. This is something with which I completely agree. As for the statement, what should be done? I certainly cannot put forward any suggestion.

I am not quite clear about what is going on at the UN. But given the current situation, any motion opposed by America will not get passed. But it does not matter whether it gets passed or not. What we should try to do is to isolate America, like what was achieved to some degree at the Geneva Conference, in order to make it hard for America to promote its policy.

You know the policy followed by India is to find a way out and resolve the difficulty. To a very small extent, India has made some achievements. The reason is that India wants to avoid getting involved in the dispute and does not side with any party. Only in this way can we exert our influence. I want to ask a question-at the UN or elsewhere, to what extent can we be of service? When we take the initiative to provide assistance, if we do not take a definitive and tough stance at the UN, things will be easier. Otherwise, we cannot keep our status as a mediator.

America's foreign policy is, to a large extent, determined by its domestic politics. At the present, all depends on next month's election. I am not saying that the policy will have a fundamental change, but the inclination is likely to shift. At this moment, all political parties are busy with their campaigns. After the election is over, we will know whether a political party in favor of peace or a political party inclined toward war is in the lead. It will be easier to adopt an appropriate policy by that time.

I do not know how the UN is going to evolve, but the main question is how to prevent war without abandoning the principles. I feel that the world is becoming increasingly averse to war. The Geneva Conference enhanced this tendency. We should take advantage of this tendency and prevent warmongers in America and elsewhere from instigating war.

I have something else to discuss with you, but I do not want to keep you up the whole night.

(After discussion, it was decided that the meeting would continue at 3 p.m. the following day.)

Zhou: Just now, Prime Minister Nehru made a few points about the UN. I want to make two points. First, India has taken a neutral stance on many issues in order to facilitate the handling of international disputes and to realize humanity's common wish for peaceful coexistence, that is, the Five Principles. This is something we understand. We hope that in the current international environment, India and China can do more promotional work. In this sense, if America agrees to peaceful coexistence, we will not reject. If America is unwilling to have peaceful coexistence and wants war instead, then we will isolate America. By "isolation," I do not mean launching aggression against or inflicting harm on America.

Nehru: It is to isolate America diplomatically.

Zhou: Right. It is to isolate America in terms of its war policy, not to isolate the American people.

But two problems would arise here. First, if America launches aggression against us, for example, if America uses the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization [SEATO] to launch aggression against India, India cannot remain neutral and will have to take a stance. It is for this reason that the Prime Minister has expressed opposition to the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization. We welcome this stance.

Nehru: "Neutrality" is not a good word. My policy is not neutrality. Regarding the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, we have made clear our opinion. Concerning America's military aid to Pakistan, we have also voiced our opinion. As for other matters, we have expressed our opinion as well. We will continue to clearly express our opinion. We're not taking a weak, passive neutral stance. But if we want to do something constructive, we have to make our opinion clear and make sure none of our actions prevents us from getting the assistance we hope for.

Zhou: It is a question of methodology.

Nehru: Yes. We avoid using [illegible] to offend other nations. Sometimes, we also use tough words, but we always express our opinion in a friendly fashion. What we oppose is a certain action rather than a country.

Zhou: The second issue is the Taiwan question. This is a complicated issue. America takes deliberate steps to create tension in the Far East and would not allow the post-Geneva Conference situation to ease further. America wants to create a situation in which, if we take actions to oppose America's aggression, America will assert that we made the situation tense; and if we do not take actions to oppose it, America will push Jiang Jieshi to expand his disruptive and sabotaging warfare. If someone comes forward to mediate, America will suggest that both sides discontinue military operations. In this way, America will get Taiwan and legalize its occupation of Taiwan. This issue is rather complicated. We cannot talk about it anymore today. We will continue tomorrow.

In a word, our basic position has been made clear. We have made a call of justice to the UN. The UN cannot claim that it is right for America to occupy Taiwan. If it does claim so, the UN will have no justice to speak of. It will completely lose its prestige in front of the people all over the world.

Nehru: I do not want to mediate on the Taiwan question.

Zhou: During its visit to China, the British Labor Party delegation discussed with me at length about the Taiwan question. Although they did not explicitly state their intent to mediate, mediation was implied.

Nehru: I do not intend to accept the status quo of Taiwan, either, as it would mean allowing Jiang Jieshi to carry on. The question is, at the UN and elsewhere, what steps can be taken to isolate America diplomatically? Although America is powerful and belligerent, if it is isolated, America will find it difficult to act. We are trying to find a way to create a situation in which America will feel isolated. Some European countries are isolating America in private, though they do not say that publicly. We are also trying to find ways to influence Burma and Indonesia and to influence European countries, though to a small extent. At present, Jiang Jieshi is continuing his attack with American support. If the UN calls for an immediate armistice so that there can be a period of time to think peacefully about how the issue can be resolved, it can be an indirect condemnation of America's and Jiang Jieshi's war acts.

Mr. Premier, do you think attack and counterattack would hinder peace? Or should we think peacefully about how to resolve the issue?

Zhou: Statements like this would only make the issue more complicated. The outlying islands have a direct effect on the living of all our fishermen. The occupation of the outlying islands and the Seventh Fleet make us vulnerable to the risk of our international transport and trade being cut off, not to mention the infringement on our sovereignty. If both sides were to stop, it would be tantamount to recognizing the status quo, and we would suffer. If both sides were to stop, it would certainly mean legalizing America's occupation of our territory. This is not something we can tolerate. In fact, their presence is a threat to us. Even if both sides stop, America would not cease using special agents to engage in aggression against China. Even if we expose it, they will not admit it.

One point must be made clear. Any action we take is part of our domestic affairs, but any action taken by America would be an interference with our domestic affairs. Only by applying this criterion of right and wrong can we isolate America and compel it to stop meddling with the outlying islands and Taiwan. But considering the way that America has been running amuck, it is not going to stop immediately. Therefore, America should be isolated so that it cannot go on. This is going to be a long-term struggle.