

October 21, 1954
**Minutes of the Third Meeting between Premier Zhou
Enlai and Nehru**

Citation:

"Minutes of the Third Meeting between Premier Zhou Enlai and Nehru", October 21, 1954, Wilson Center Digital Archive, PRC FMA 204-00007-09, 62-80. Obtained by Chen Jian and translated by 7Brands. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121748>

Summary:

Zhou and Nehru discuss developments in South Asia and Southeast Asia.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from MacArthur Foundation

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

Minutes of Premier Zhou Enlai's Third Meeting with Prime Minister [Jawaharlal] Nehru
(Not Reviewed)

Time: 21 October 1954, 3:30 pm-6:15 pm

Place: Xihua Hall, Zhongnanhai

China's accompanied attendees: Deputy Minister Zhang Hanfu, Ambassador [illegible], Department Director [illegible], Pu Shouchang (interpreter and recorder)

India's accompanied attendees: Pi-lai [sic], Nedyam Raghavan, Ri-chun-hui [sic] (interpreter)

Zhou: I met Chairman Mao yesterday. He said it would be more suitable if he would talk with you after we have a talk. I have some other issues to talk about. I want to ask several questions and I hope I can get your advice.

First, I want to ask about the situation in Indonesia. We have invited the Indonesian prime minister [Ali Sastroamidjojo] to visit China, but the Indonesian prime minister hopes we can visit Indonesia first.

Nehru: It is difficult to analyze Indonesia's situation. The Indonesian government is unstable. It is not because of foreign troubles, but because of internal disputes. In the Java region, extremist Muslims revolted, though the scale was small. Although the revolt has been suppressed, it has not been completely suppressed. In Java, Muslim guerrilla teams often turn up, so it is difficult to pass by Java and some special protective measures should be taken. My sister visited Java not long ago, so I know the situation there. The revolt is not important. Although it is a trouble for the government, it cannot go so far as to affect the government.

From the perspective of the congress, the Indonesian government is unstable because it is a coalition. The party of the Indonesian prime minister is a minority party, and it has to unite with other parties to gain a majority position. If any party quits, it will lose the majority position. In the past two or three weeks, there were some disputes among these parties. It is difficult to predict what the government will be like in a few months. Because of such an unstable situation, I suggest you visit Indonesia after the situation is clear. Otherwise, it will be very embarrassing if the Indonesian government undergoes some changes during your visit. Of course, I do not mean you will not be welcome under such circumstances, because President Sukarno remains and is kind.

I said yesterday that, according to the current arrangement, the Colombo Conference will be held in Jakarta in late December-around 28 December.

I heard today that the Pakistani prime minister [Muhammad Ali Bogra] suddenly shortened his visit to the United States and was already back in Pakistan. The reason is that something went wrong in Pakistan.

Zhou: With respect to the political disputes in Indonesia, are there any external factors, such as the influence of the United States?

Nehru: The United States has exerted a huge influence, and it is exerting pressure on Indonesia and asking Indonesia to join the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization [SEATO] or at least take a friendly attitude towards it. But I think the United States has not played a role in the current crisis of the Indonesian cabinet.

Three years ago, the influence of the United States in Indonesia was considerable, partly because the United States helped Indonesia fight against the Netherlands. Of

course, such help was diplomatic. The United States also imposed pressure on the Netherlands and asked it to agree to Indonesia's demands.

But later, the San Francisco conference on the treaty with Japan was held. There were two sides in Indonesia, and the majority was opposed to signing the San Francisco Treaty of Peace with Japan. But then the government signed the treaty under the pressure of the United States, so it was unpopular among the people. At last, the government had to resign. Since then, the influence of the United States has begun to decline in Indonesia. Of course, the United States continues to exert pressure and offers economic aid. After its independence, Indonesia was in urgent need of well-trained personnel, and it even did not have enough administrative personnel, so it retained a lot of Dutch advisers. This indicates Indonesia's weakness following its independence. We also often dispatch experts to Indonesia. Although Indonesia and the Netherlands had disputes over the Netherlands-New Guinea issue, which made Indonesia very agitated, Indonesia still retained many Dutch advisers.

Zhou: I am considering an issue about Ceylon. Ceylon and China have mutually recognized each other, and the trade between the two countries is also developing, but Ceylon is not willing to establish formal diplomatic relations with China. Of course we are not anxious, and we will not impose our will on Ceylon. But we'd like to know your expectation of the development in this respect.

Nehru: Ceylon is constitutionally independent, but its whole set of organizations is no different from that in colonial times. There is one point that should be remembered. Among India, Pakistan, Ceylon, and Burma, the struggle for independence took place only in India. Pakistan reaped the benefits, but its leaders have never engaged in struggle. And there was also not a struggle in Ceylon. Ceylon just gained independence because India became independent. So there were no mass movements in Ceylon. One of Ceylon's seaports was an important naval base for the United Kingdom in Southeast Asia, but the United Kingdom did not interfere in Ceylon's internal affairs. Ceylon is not experienced in diplomatic affairs, and it is immersed in its internal affairs and especially interested in the prices of rubber and tea. Ceylon's prime minister [John Kotelawala] is one of the largest landlords in Ceylon and holds a very conservative attitude. There is no anti-China sentiment in Ceylon-definitely among the Ceylon people-but Ceylon does not intend to offend the United States. At the Colombo Conference, all five countries strongly endorsed that China join the United Nations.

Ceylon's prime minister has just visited India to talk about the issue of Indians in Ceylon. There are 900,000 Indians in Ceylon, of which 150,000 have Indian nationality, whereas the others have lived in Ceylon for 60 or 70 years or have grown up in Ceylon. The problem is about the latter because the Ceylon government wanted to deport them from Ceylon. We requested that the Ceylon government treat them as citizens of Ceylon. As for us, we are willing to accept any Indians who choose India as their citizenship according to Indian laws as Indian citizens. But in our opinion, those who have worked in Ceylon for more than 20 years or grew up in Ceylon should obtain Ceylonese citizenship.

Zhou: Are these Indians willing?

Nehru: Yes, they are.

Zhou: Which language do these Indians speak?

Nehru: The Southern Indian language. Actually, the Ceylon language is one of India's, and the Ceylon people were migrants from India two or three hundred years ago. The Indians who have encountered problems in Ceylon are those who were taken to

Ceylon by the United Kingdom sixty or seventy years ago from India to work on tea plantations.

Zhou: Another issue I want to ask is about Thailand. I once told Mr. [V. K. Krishna] Menon that China is willing to keep in touch with Thailand and is willing to peacefully coexist with Thailand through the Five Principles. What do you think of the feasibility?

Nehru: We have ambassadors in Thailand, but our contacts with Thailand are not close. Recently, Thailand will send a delegation to India to promote rice, but we do not need it. Thailand's economy depends on rice to a large extent. During and after World War II, Thailand's economy was rather prosperous and not in economic hardship. Farmers obtained favorable rice prices and felt satisfied. The Thai government is very strange. The Thai navy and land forces are usually closed, but because of the economic prosperity, farmers would not revolt and they did not care much about the issues in the superstratum.

Thailand is associated with the United States. Four years ago, namely, in early 1949, we held a meeting at Delhi to talk about the independence of Indonesia. At that time, we invited all the Asian countries, but only Thailand and Turkey did not attend the meeting. They told us privately that they were very eager to attend the meeting, but they were regretfully unable to attend the meeting because they did not dare offend the United States. But they found out later that the United States was not opposed to that meeting, so they were very embarrassed.

In terms of the issue you have asked just now, I do not think there will be a response immediately from Thailand, but in some time Thailand may give a reply to the question about establishing a formal relationship with China.

Zhou: Yes, this issue takes some time.

Nehru: Thailand's economy has always been good, but it now faces difficulties. There are more sellers than buyers in the rice market, and Thailand has also met some difficulties in promoting its rice. We do not need the rice. Even if we needed rice, we could purchase it from Burma because Burma is friendlier. I stopped in Rangoon when I came to visit China this time. I absolutely could have stopped in Bangkok, but I avoided doing so. I think the Thai government is very corrupt. Thailand's high-ranking officials smuggled arms to the Guomindang army in the north of Burma and have made a lot of money.

Zhou: I would like to talk about the three countries on the Indochina Peninsula, which you have passed on your way to China or will pass on your way back to India. Vietnam has not been united. According to your observations, is it possible for India to establish a normal relationship with Laos and Cambodia? These two countries are within the scope of Southeast Asia. We said that we hoped these two countries had the same stands and developments as the major countries in Southeast Asia. I talked with the foreign ministers of these two countries over this point after I went to Geneva from Delhi.

Nehru: I passed by Laos and Hanoi this time, and I talked with the ministers and the King of Laos. I also had a long talk with Dr. Ho Chi Minh. As for India's dispatching of representatives, I told them that India had actually recognized them, and that our representatives in the International Committee were in contact with them every day. As for official recognition, I think it is not convenient for India to do so as the president of the International Committee. If we only recognize several countries without recognizing others, we will be in some difficulty. If we recognize all the countries, there will also be some difficulties because Vietnam has not been united. I said to Dr. Ho Chi Minh that we have actually recognized him. India planned to dispatch a consul general but not an ambassador there. In addition, our representatives in the International Committee were there and in contact with them

every day.

As you know, these Southeast Asian countries are under the influence of India and China in a very interesting way. The countries on the continent are more under China's influence. On the Indochina Peninsula, Laos and Cambodia are more under India's influence.

Now, Laos and Cambodia, especially Laos, are worried about withdrawing foreign armies. If all the foreign armies are withdrawn, there will be favorable conditions; in this way, the internal issues will be solved by themselves, otherwise there will be some difficulties. Laos' prime minister is very worried about withdrawing foreign armies, because he said the United States is exerting pressure and is opposed to the withdrawal of the French army, because the resistance forces will not withdraw. Therefore, he said that if the resistance force withdraws, the French army will also withdraw. This will make it easier for him to arrive at an agreement with the resistance force. As you know, Laos' king and the leader of the resistance force are brothers. Now the United States is facing huge pressure in Laos. The deadline for withdrawing the foreign armies is 21 October. If the withdrawal is made on schedule, the internal unity and adjustment will be made easier. Otherwise, the United States will interfere on one pretext or another.

According to my impression, Laos' prime minister is a good person and he is willing to arrive at an agreement. Now he has resigned. He was pleaded back to govern the country, but he said that he would not be back until two months later because he would be able to take actions freely then. I do not know what he will do.

Zhou: It is assumed that you have told Chairman Ho Chi Minh of such situations. We believe every clause of the Geneva Agreement should be implemented, which would allow Laos to have a stable situation. We are always in support of Laos' appeal for unity, and we think matters should be handled in accordance with the agreement. We hope India, the president of the International Supervision and Monitoring Committee, will make achievements in promoting the implementation of the Agreement. This is conducive to the realization of regional peace.

Nehru: India is eager to offer assistance, but according to the Geneva Agreement, the International Committee shall not interfere in the internal affairs of the three countries. The International Committee, composed of India, Poland, and Canada, votes unanimously in resolutions. I do not know how long such a situation will be maintained. The current procedure is that a matter is first referred to the Joint Commission and then to the International Committee. What I said today is merely a repetition of what our representatives in the Committee told me.

We have over 600 people there, including the civil officials in the Committee and the Delegation and the military officers in the group.

Zhou: What India undertakes is a formidable task. We are in support of you, and we hope you will make more achievements.

The Indochina issue reminds me of the Korean issue. When I was in Geneva, Mr. Menon talked with me about whether India would make proposals and which proposals were acceptable to China when the United Nations discuss this issue. At that time I suggested one principle, namely, if India made a proposal, it may propose to hold a conference like the Geneva Conference to discuss the peaceful settlement of the Korean issue, and the participating countries may be added. Now the proposal may be made more specific. In terms of the participating countries, neutral countries in Southeast Asia may be added to the former 19 countries. In terms of the time, next year is fine if it is not possible this year. The place of the conference may be proposed

by the United Nations. We will agree if Geneva is selected, and we will also agree if Delhi is selected. When the prime minister of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea visited Beijing, I exchanged my ideas with him with respect to this issue. Of course, as a proposal to the United Nations, this is only unilateral, and it is subject to the consent of the People's Republic of China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and South Korea because none of these countries are members of the United Nations. At that time, Mr. Menon agreed to the principle I proposed. If Mr. Menon thinks that it is a suitable time to make this proposal to the United Nations, the proposal had better be proposed by India. We have talked with the government of the Soviet Union with respect to this issue. When I passed by the Soviet Union on my way back to China, I told the foreign minister, Molotov, the opinions of Mr. Menon. After I was back in China, I also told the government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. They all agreed to the opinions which were discussed by Mr. Menon and me in Geneva, so I tell you now. If you think this suggestion is worth considering, please notify Mr. Menon to make a study. One proposal might not be passed, but it will be difficult for the United States to oppose the proposal because it will be difficult for them to refuse the opportunity to talk about the Korean issue.

I once told you that, on the second day after the discussion of the Korean issue at the Geneva Conference came to nothing, [Anthony] Eden said to me in person that Smith told him to tell me that the United States did not have the intention to repel China. Eden also reiterated that the United States also did not have the intention to repel China. As long as they do not repel China, the discussion will be only made outside the United Nations because we are not a member of the United Nations.

Nehru: As for what you have said with respect to the Korean issue, I have nothing to add. I think there are two main aspects to this issue. First, do not tolerate the worsening of the situation. Second, progress should be made in order to solve the problem. The first aspect is negative, and the second aspect is positive. We must be fully prepared at any time to prevent the worsening of the situation, and this is a common procedure. As for making progress, we should await an opportune moment; only in this way can we get the results we hope to see. I think the only way, when the opportunity comes, is to hold a conference another time. As for the participating countries, we do not have any dispute. If India is not invited, we will not care. If we are invited, we will participate. In this respect, there are two important things. The first one is the opportunity, and the second is what to propose at the meeting. If the meeting is held but there is no specific solution, it will not be helpful.

First, with respect to the opportunity, your ideas are not suitable at the moment because they will be rejected immediately. They will not be rejected because the logic is not well-grounded, but because most countries think they will not produce much effect even if another meeting is held. The United States will not agree. The United States will not agree to anything before its upcoming election. The proposal of the Soviet Union with respect to the Taiwan issue has been passed. Now there is a trend of postponing issues. So we better reconsider the issue depending on the situation after the election in the United States.

Second, preparations must be made before the proposal in order to see the response of the other countries, such as the United Kingdom and France. After they have prepared their attitudes and have something in common, things will be easier to handle. If the proposal is made immediately, the representatives of the other countries will be at a loss and they will not even have the time to ask their governments for instructions. You are very familiar with the Korean issue, but others are not so familiar.

Therefore, my reply to you is, first, I will notify Mr. Menon of your ideas; second, we should always bear in mind preventing the worsening of the situation. After the Geneva Conference, the United States thought this issue had come to an end, but we think this issue has to be reconsidered. This issue has not been solved, so it has not

come to a conclusion. Third, we should make preparations for the representatives of other countries, and the issue will be reconsidered after the election of the United States.

Zhou: Thank you for your attention to this issue. According to the current situation in Korea, a worsening of the situation is not likely to break out soon. We have withdrawn some troops recently, and we have told the United States that we will not provoke war. It will be difficult for Syngman Rhee to provoke war.

□[Illegible]

Nehru: Yes. But the United States made a lot of trouble in Nepal. It carried out anti-Indian propagandist campaigns in Nepal. We once lodged protest with the United States and the United Kingdom, although the United Kingdom is less to blame and does not interfere in Nepal's internal affairs. I said to them, they must recognize India's special position in Nepal, but they were undermining India's reputation in Nepal.

Finally, I have another issue to talk about. If possible, I hope China can supply [illegible] for Kashmir.

Zhou: Absolutely we can. This is helpful for the Kashmir people to develop the economy, so Pakistan will not be opposed to this. I hope Kashmir will dispatch representatives for contact.

Tomorrow, a few responsible persons of the government will talk with you about specific issues. They have made preparations in accordance with the requirements on your list, and they will bring some documents. If all the issues cannot be discussed on the spot, we will give you some documents. As we said just now, we should exchange documents and books as much as possible. If you find you need some documents tomorrow, you can tell the responsible person.

There will be four people who will talk with you. The first is Deputy Premier Chen Yun; he is the first deputy minister. The second is the vice premier in charge of economy, the third is the vice premier in charge of agriculture, and the fourth is the Minister of Water Resources. All of them are considerably experienced. As for the issues with respect to culture and science, someone will talk with you on the afternoon of the day after tomorrow.

Nehru: Thank you. Soon afterwards, we want to dispatch a delegation composed of two or three experts in planning to China. I want them to visit China and have a discussion with your experts. I think it is helpful for us. And we will also dispatch three or four experts in planning to the Soviet Union.

Zhou: You are welcome. We are backward compared to the Soviet Union. But Indian experts may compare what they see in the Soviet Union and what they see in China. Some of our experiences may be for India's reference.

Nehru: China and India have similar national conditions. So your experience is more helpful for India.

Zhou: We have talked about almost all the issues that we should talk about. Is it necessary to issue a communiqué in addition to this meeting? Or do you have other forms to recommend?

Nehru: I do not think a formal communiqué is necessary. Before I leave China, I will hold a press conference. Then of course I will mention our meeting, and I will mention our meeting after I am back in India. If the communiqué contains only a vague paragraph or two, it will not make much sense, but it is difficult to make a detailed statement.

Zhou: Okay, it will be reconsidered.