

May 26, 1955

**Minutes of Conversation between Premier Zhou
Enlai and British Charge d'Affaires Humphrey
Trevelyan**

Citation:

"Minutes of Conversation between Premier Zhou Enlai and British Charge d'Affaires Humphrey Trevelyan", May 26, 1955, Wilson Center Digital Archive, PRC FMA 207-00010-16, 61-69. Translated by Yafeng Xia.
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/110837>

Summary:

Zhou briefed Trevelyan about China's position in Taiwan issue that was produced in a document produced by PRC National People's Congress Standing Committee in response to Britain's request.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from MacArthur Foundation

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

Time: 26 May 1955, 5:00 p.m to 5:55 p.m.

Location: Xihuating, Zhongnanhai

Chinese in Attendance: Director-General Huang Hua; Pu Shouchang (interpreter and recorder)

British in Attendance: [Edward] Joude

Premier Zhou says there are several matters to be discussed.

First, in our last meeting, Mr. [Humphrey] Trevelyan mentioned that the British Foreign Secretary [Harold McMillan] hopes that the Chinese government could clarify its position on Taiwan. We have prepared a document, the content of which is part of my report on the Afro-Asian Conference on the Taiwan issue to the Standing Committee of National People's Congress. This is a formal announcement of our position. Although it was published in the newspaper, we, nonetheless, have printed out a clean copy for you (Premier Zhou handed over the document in both Chinese and English. See attachment). In addition, we have some oral opinions, which we hope Mr. Trevelyan will transmit to the British Foreign Secretary.

The document I handed over to you today represents the Chinese stance. At the meeting of the delegation heads of eight countries, we elaborated our position based on this stand. There are several important points regarding our stand. I will talk about them with [Krishna] Menon [Indian Ambassador to the UN]. But I would like to address them now:

1. In order to facilitate talks between China and the US, both sides should work directly or indirectly in order to relax tensions in the Taiwan area. This is not a give-and-take condition, but rather will demonstrate the sincerity of both sides. On the Chinese side, after our Bandung declaration, we made several other statements. Soon, we would like to take additional steps to show that China is willing to relax tensions. We believe that the US, with Britain's influence, should take concrete steps for relaxing tensions. In this way, it would create favorable conditions for China and the US to sit down and talk.
2. In order to relax tensions and create favorable conditions for the realization of Sino-American talks, we have consulted with Mr. Menon that we agree to prior diplomatic contacts with the US, such as what we have already been doing. China and the US may come in contact through other countries, such as Soviet, Indian and British introduction. Or the Chinese and US envoys may also come in contact in Moscow, London and Delhi through the introduction of these governments. We have already indicated this stipulation to the Indian and British governments. Now, we would like Mr. Trevelyan to convey this to the British government. We would like to hear Britain's opinions.
3. The topic of Sino-American negotiations is to relax and eliminate tension in the Taiwan area. We have not yet made a decision on the final format of the negotiations. We agree to and support the Soviet proposal of a ten-country conference. It is also alright to hold a conference with more or less than ten countries. China and the United States may also talk to each other directly with the help of other countries. We will not decide what format to adopt at present. It depends on further developments.
4. No matter under what the circumstance and time [of the Sino-American negotiations], Jiang Jieshi is not allowed to participate in these international conferences. The Chinese government does not reject, but on the contrary, welcomes direct contact with Jiang Jieshi. In the document I handed to you today, [we mention] that there are two ways to liberate Taiwan-through peaceful means or war. We strive to liberate Taiwan through peaceful means if conditions permit. That is, to negotiate with Jiang Jieshi. Thus, there are two kinds of negotiations: one is an international

negotiation between China and the US; the other is domestic political negotiation between China and Jiang Jieshi. We strive for these two kinds of negotiations, which could be simultaneous or in any sort of sequence. Although they are related to each other, we should not lump them together.

The aforementioned four points are what needs to be explained based on the Chinese government's position. Since the British government wants us to clarify [these points], we hope that Mr. Trevelyan will transmit them [to the British government]. These are not intended for public announcement. The document on the Chinese government position I handed (to you today) is public. It is for the review of the British government. But the aforementioned four points are not for publication. They might be conducive to the British effort to promote and relax tension.

Trevelyan says that Premier Zhou's oral message will be warmly welcomed by the British government. The British Foreign Secretary will be very pleased to receive these clarifications. He says he wants to ask some minor questions in order to find out if he completely understands Premier Zhou's four points. He says, according to his understanding, Premier Zhou suggests that both sides take steps to relax tensions, but this is not a precondition for negotiations. He says that he believes Premier Zhou does not want to elaborate what steps the US should take at present.

Premier Zhou says we want to see responses from the US. We had discussed this issue with Mr. Menon. Since Mr. Menon is going to Washington via London, he will talk with the new British government. The British people are electing a new government. The Chinese people have always respected the British people's right to choose its own government.

Trevelyan says he understands Premier Zhou's second point, that is, through the mediation of the Soviet, British, and Indian governments, Chinese and US Ambassadors will hold bilateral talks in Moscow in order to discuss preparatory work for the Sino-American negotiations.

Premier Zhou says it is not only in Moscow, but also in London and Delhi.

Trevelyan asks if the contacts at three locations should be simultaneous or come under one control. He says this is only a technical issue. The reason why he asks is because he wants to avoid overlapping.

Premier Zhou says this question needs explanation. The first step of diplomatic contact [between the US and China] is via the mediation of the Soviet Union, India and the UK. For example, in the case of India, Mr. Menon is coming to Beijing, but he will also visit Washington. This is mediation. In the case of the UK, the British government wants to know the Chinese attitude, and will notify the US of the Chinese attitude. Meanwhile, the UK will also notify us of the US attitude. In the case of the Soviet Union, Dulles talked about the Taiwan issue with Soviet Foreign Minister [Vyacheslav] Molotov. As to the contact between the Chinese and US envoys through the introduction of the three countries, that is auxiliary. Without the first kind of contact, the second kind of contact is useless, even impossible.

Trevelyan says, as for China, it makes no difference whether the contacts between the Chinese and US envoys are at one location, two locations, or three locations. He says, as to the third point proposed by Premier Zhou, the scope of Sino-American negotiations, Premier Zhou only talked about the relaxation of tensions in the Taiwan area. It is not suitable to discuss the details now. It is a topic of discussion or elaboration for future contacts when necessary.

Premier Zhou says the topics for discussion, in general, should include issues raised

by both sides. Thus, the formulation of "relaxing and eliminating tensions in the Taiwan area" is appropriate. Otherwise, it is not easy to find a suitable expression.

Trevelyan says the fourth question is about an opportune moment for negotiations. He says he knows very well that the first kind of negotiation is international in nature, while the second kind is domestic in nature. He asks whether Premier Zhou believes that the opportune moment for these two kinds of negotiation could be discussed at the preliminary negotiation stage, which is during the diplomatic contacts mentioned in his second point.

Premier Zhou replies that diplomatic contact is primarily for international negotiation. As for domestic negotiations, this is China's internal affairs. It may be conducted anytime. As for how to peacefully resolve the Taiwan issue, it may be discussed in the diplomatic contacts. We do not reject the discussion of this issue.

Trevelyan says he still has a question about the use of the phrase. He asks does "diplomatic contact" refer to direct negotiations for the purpose of considering concrete issues? Is it similar to China's contacts with other countries at Geneva? The reason he asks the question is because he wants to understand the issue correctly so as to lead it to down a promising path.

Premier Zhou says diplomatic contacts are not negotiations, nor are they open negotiations. Diplomatic contact is contact via diplomatic channels. It is not open. Premier Zhou asks, does Trevelyan envisage the issue of diplomatic recognition, which the US side has raised?

Trevelyan says that is right. He says this might be the reason why the US government opposes diplomatic contact. The purpose of the question is to tell London confidently that the Chinese does not intend such an implication.