

July 13, 1955

Minutes of Conversation between Premier Zhou Enlai and British Charge d'Affaires Con O'Neill

Citation:

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Translated by Yafeng Xia.

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Summary:

O'Neill passed on US position on the Sino-US talks in Geneva to Zhou. Zhou and O'Neil exchanged the positions of both countries regarding the talks and the dispute regarding the repatriation of the Chinese and American nationals to their country of origins.

Credits:

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Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

Time: 13 July 1955

Location: The Foreign Ministry

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

British in Attendance: Counselor [John] Addis; [Edward] Joude

[British Chargé d'affaires to the PRC Con] O'Neill presents Premier Zhou a copy of the British announcement signed by [British Prime Minister Anthony] Eden and a personal note from Foreign Secretary Harold Macmillan. Macmillan hopes to meet with Premier Zhou in the future and establish relations similar to what Eden has had with him.

Premier Zhou says that he is willing to establish close relations with Foreign Secretary Macmillan and expects to establish such a relationship through the British and Chinese Chargé d'affaires.

O'Neill says that he received instructions from Foreign Secretary Macmillan this morning, asking him to transmit the US government's oral message to Premier Zhou. He says that he was instructed to transmit this message orally, but he is willing to leave a hand-written note for Premier Zhou as well. The US government note is as follows:

"Your and our consul-level representatives have been meeting in Geneva to negotiate the repatriation of civilians to their respective countries over the past year. We are disappointed with the results. It has been suggested that it would aid in the resolution of the issue if it is dealt with at a higher level. This will also contribute to the settlement of other practical matters at issue between our two sides. If you are in favor of this, we will appoint an ambassadorial-level representative to meet with your representative of identical rank at an agreed time in Geneva."

O'Neill says he was instructed to raise three additional points:

1. The US government is not going to announce this proposal before receiving your response. It will only announce it at a time agreed upon by both sides after receiving your reply.
2. The US government assumes that the proposed talks do not suggest diplomatic recognition. This is similar to the Sino-American contacts at Geneva.
3. The British government believes that the proposal is very useful. The British government hopes that the Chinese government will accept this proposal.

The Premier says that [the Chinese government] is not replying to the US government's proposal right now. But [he] wants to raise several points:

1. At the Geneva Conference, the Chinese and US representatives agreed that consuls of both sides notify the other side of information regarding their nationals. Thus, the contacts between the two sides go beyond this limit. In this regard, the Chinese side informed the US side of many things about the US nationals [in China]. But the information the US side gave us regarding Chinese students is inaccurate. It is not clear whether some of the things have been taken care of or not. Should there be any dissatisfaction, we have more reason to feel it [than the US].
2. For these reasons, we once told Menon of India that we wanted to propose to the US through him. For the purpose of resolving the issue of nationals in each other's respective countries and because there is no diplomatic relationship between China

and the US, our two governments could entrust a third party to represent one another on the issue of nationals. The US government once raised the issue, through the Office of the British Chargé d'affaires, that the Office of the British Chargé d'affaires represents the affairs of the US nationals. That was several years ago. In view of the situation at that time, we did not respond. At the Geneva Conference we suggested a similar proposal. But the US did not respond. Thus we again proposed [this] to Menon. For example, the US may entrust Britain to represent US nationals [in China] while India could represent Chinese nationals [in the US]. Thus, it will be able to move from information exchanges to actual settlement. I assume that Menon has already talked about this with the British government. We think this is the best and most practical way. Incidentally, this is what the US first proposed. We modified it for both sides. This is more conducive to the settlement of practical issues than the negotiations between the two sides proposed by the US.

3. As to the current US proposal, of course, we will not make it public before responding.

O'Neill says that he will report what the Premier has just discussed to Foreign Secretary McMillan. He is grateful to the Premier for putting forward these informal ideas. He acknowledges that the Premier has reservations toward proposing a formal reply. He says, of course, he is not in the position to comment and interpret the US government letter. But he wants to point out, and he is certain that the Premier must have noticed, that the letter says that this proposal "will aid in further discussion and settlement of other practical matters at issue between the two sides." He wants to reiterate the British government's position that this proposal is extremely useful, and hopes that the Chinese government will accept. He says he hopes the Premier would call him in and tell him the decision after further study and consultation.

The Premier agreed to notify the Office of the British Chargé d'affaires of the Chinese decision for transmitting to the US government.