

July 19, 1954

**Minutes of Conversation between Zhang Wentian
and Harold Caccia, Second Meeting of 19 July**

Citation:

"Minutes of Conversation between Zhang Wentian and Harold Caccia, Second Meeting of 19 July", July 19, 1954, Wilson Center Digital Archive, PRC FMA. Translated by Zhao Han
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/111059>

Summary:

Zhou meets with Eden to discuss five points: the demarcation line in Vietnam, elections, the international supervisory committee, withdrawal of foreign troops, and a guarantee that collective measures will be taken if a breach of an agreement is made.

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

Time: 19 July 1954, 5:45 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Location: Headquarters of the British delegation

Chinese Attendees: Huan Xiang, Pu Shouchang (interpreter)

British Attendees: Ford

Ambassador Zhang said that the information that Mr. Caccia requested this afternoon would be provided now, and that he please convey it to Foreign Secretary [Anthony] Eden.

Ambassador Zhang said that the first point concerned the demarcation line. Now the Democratic Republic of Vietnam has made a further concession, i.e., accommodating the topographical details, the demarcation line is to be set ten kilometers north of Route 9. If the other side still refuses to accept this, we should just buy our tickets home. According to this proposal, the security of Route 9 is no longer a problem.

Caccia said he was afraid that a ten-kilometer area might be too narrow.

Ambassador Zhang said that a five-kilometer demilitarized zone on each side of the demarcation line would be established.

Caccia said that he could not accept this proposal on behalf of the French side. He said that this matter needed to be discussed further by [Pierre] Mendes-France and Pham Van Dong, and that he believed that the French side might want a few more kilometers.

Ambassador Zhang said that the second point concerned the date for elections. The DRV has also made a further concession to hold general elections two years after the signing of the agreement on the cessation of hostilities. The precise date and the actual method of the elections would be negotiated by qualified and representative authorities from the northern and southern regions of Vietnam, and a decision was to be made no later than June 1955.

Caccia made no comment on this point and only said that it would be discussed by Mendes-France and Pham Van Dong.

Ambassador Zhang said that the third point concerned the membership of the International Supervisory Commission. The International Supervisory Commission is to be composed of representatives from the following three countries: India, Poland and Canada, chaired by the Indian representative. This has been accepted by Mr. Eden and Mr. Mendes-France, and we can confirm it now.

Caccia said that the UK accepted this, and that France had said that it would accept it. The United States had not stated its attitude, but hopefully would accept it, too. For the sake of certainty, Caccia said that he would try to learn the American attitude and telephone the Chinese side about it.

Ambassador Zhang said that the fourth point concerned the timing of the withdrawal and transfer of troops by both sides. The regrouping of the armed forces within Vietnam is to be completed with 245 days.

Caccia said that when this question was first raised, it was divided into two parts. The first part was based upon the material conditions for the withdrawal of troops, such as the railway and ports. Based on calculations of the transportation capacity per day, France proposed 305 days, and later, after some reconsideration, proposed 260 days. The second part took into account estimates of inclement weather, and France

proposed two and a half months in addition. Putting forward the present proposal of 245 days is to ask Mendes-France to entrust all his hopes to good fortune, and Mendes-France might feel dismayed by this.

Ambassador Zhang said that, according to our calculations, six months would be enough. The present proposal of 245 days has taken into consideration bad luck. Generally speaking, Mr. Mendes-France has had good luck, and only a few days of bad luck.

Caccia said that this question needed to be discussed by Mendes-France and Pham Van Dong.

Ambassador Zhang said that the fifth point concerned the guarantee by all the participating countries at the Geneva Conference to negotiate the adoption of collective measures when the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission presents the problem of a breach of the agreement. This was the last article of the political declaration. The French draft used the expression "individual and collective measures," but we think it would be better if we adopt collective measures.

Caccia said that he had not seen the final draft yet, and that he could only say that he had noted our opinion. He said that US representatives said yesterday that if an agreement was reached here, they were willing to honor it. They would issue an individual statement to promise that they would not sabotage this agreement. If someone else had the intention to sabotage it, they would consider it a grave matter. These remarks by the US representatives indicated that they did not want to be bound on the issue of collective measures. Caccia then added that US representatives said yesterday that they would act in accordance with the second and fourth articles of the United Nations Charter, and that any actions taken in accordance with the UN Charter could be said to be collective in some degree. Caccia said that the question of collective measures therefore might encounter some difficulty.