

July 13, 1954
**Minutes of Conversation between Zhou Enlai and
Anthony Eden**

Citation:

"Minutes of Conversation between Zhou Enlai and Anthony Eden", July 13, 1954, Wilson Center Digital Archive, PRC FMA 206-Y0006. Translated by Zhao Han.
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/111069>

Summary:

Zhou describes his meeting with Mendes-France and his trip to visit India to Eden. Zhou mentions the Sino-Indian and Sino-Burmese statements, and asks Eden to consider them a binding statement that China has no designs on Indochina, contrary to American suspicions. The two also discuss the upcoming meeting of Mendes-France with Pham Van Dong, and the possibility for progress during this meeting.

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

Time: 13 July 1954, 11:35 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

Location: Foreign Minister Zhou's Residence

Chinese Participants: Zhou Enlai, Zhang Wentian, Wang Bingnan, Huan Xiang, Pu Shouchang (interpreter and note-taker)

British Participants: Anthony Eden, Harold Caccia, William D. Allen, Ford

Eden: I came to visit you this morning before I depart for Paris, mainly to learn your understanding of the prospects after your talk with the French.

Zhou Enlai: After I had a talk with Mr. Mendes-France, I felt that we shared many common points on many issues and our opinions were quite similar. Now the specific issue is the question of demarcation in Vietnam. I said to Mr. Mendes-France that France needed to advance further southward from the 18th parallel. So far as I know, the Vietnamese side is willing to make more concessions for a French move. I understand that Mr. Pham Van Dong is meeting with Mr. Mendes-France today. I hope that their opinions will come close together.

Eden: I hope so, too. Thank you for your message through [British Chargé d'Affaires in Beijing] Mr. [Humphrey] Trevelyan. In that message you mentioned that you had had met with [Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV)] Chairman Ho Chi Minh and that you had had a very good talk. Could you tell me more about this interesting talk?

Zhou Enlai: After I talked with you on the 16th of last month, I met with Mr. Mendes-France on the 23rd, and we discussed many things. Afterwards I visited India and Burma, and had talks with the prime ministers of the two countries. I discussed with Chairman Ho Chi Minh the issues covered in these talks. I exchanged with Chairman Ho Chi Minh our opinions on the issues of Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and peace in Southeast Asia, and in the end we achieved a common understanding. I trust that Mr. Eden would be delighted to hear this. Regarding the issue of peace in Indochina after my return this time, I believe that from the perspective of China, the Soviet Union, and Vietnam, from the perspective of France, and from the perspective of the British Royal government as well, a common solution could be found. Likewise, our wish and policies on restoring peace in Indochina have won support from India, Burma, and some countries in the Colombo Conference.[1] Mr. Eden must have read the Sino-Indian and Sino-Burmese joint statements. I believe that these two statements would promote peace in Indochina. In these statements, we have also said that we would not reject the participation of any country in the effort for peace.

Eden: After Mr. Premier's visit to India, Mr. Nehru told me about your visit in a telegram. I believe your talk was useful. Everyone hopes for a resolution, and when I say this I include Washington. We very much hope that our arrangements will not only be supported by the participating countries like us, but also involve the Colombo Conference countries in some way.

Zhou Enlai: Yes, I did what I could in this regard during my visit to India and Burma this time. I am especially grateful to Prime Minister Nehru and Prime Minister U Nu for their enthusiastic support. It was a pity that I only had such a short time that I could not visit Indonesia.

Eden: You are truly a tireless traveler. On the issue of Laos and Cambodia, is everything going all right? The reason I am asking this question is that I have met with Mr. Molotov, and so far as I know, the Viet Minh has presented a map according to which they demanded large portions of Laotian territory.

Zhou Enlai: I believe that the question of Cambodia will be resolved after some further contact. As to the question of Laos, I have discussed it with both you and

[French Prime Minister] Mr. Mendes[-France], and I believe that such a resolution could be achieved. As to the talks by the military representatives, it is possible for their demands to be a little more or a little less, but that is not non-negotiable. Prime Minister Nehru and Prime Minister U Nu both would like to see Laos and Cambodia become Southeast Asia-type countries ("Southeast Asia-type" is my terminology; Prime Minister Nehru used the word "neutral," i.e. countries like India and Burma), therefore this is our common wish. We do not wish for Laos and Cambodia to become military bases for any foreign countries, nor do we wish for either country to participate in any military alliance that is hostile to the other.

Eden: These could all be agreed upon. Of course both countries must remain unified.

Zhou Enlai: Not only unified, but they also have to be free countries.

Eden: Neither country's territory should be snatched away.

Zhou Enlai: We both agree that the determined areas in Laos are only temporary, and that unification must be achieved after the elections. Now that we only have a short [amount of] time [left], everyone must make an effort, and we must not let anyone impede us.

Eden: We all hope that Mr. Mendes-France can succeed. Should he fail, it would be very bad for all of us. This would have great implications.

Zhou Enlai: But some people are hoping that he will fail.

Eden: I know what you mean, but my opinion is not exactly the same.

Zhou Enlai: Mr. Eden should know a little more since you have been to Washington.

Eden: I found that there is much mutual suspicion. The United States thinks that China has ambitions in Southeast Asia, not for now but in the long run. I have found that you also think that the United States has ambitions in Southeast Asia, claiming that the US is trying to establish military bases in Southeast Asia and so forth. It would be good to achieve an agreement amidst such mutual fear.

Zhou Enlai: We have issued joint statements with India and Burma, and we have expressed a willingness to issue the same statement with any Southeast Asian country and accept to be bound by such a statement. This proves that not only now do we have no ambitions, but even in the future we will have no such ambitions. However, the US still would not relinquish its plans for military bases and alliances in Southeast Asia. On this issue, the United Kingdom should be able to make a fair judgment.

Eden: As I said just now, each side is suspicious of the other. Our American friends said that we had been deceived, but we are willing to take the risk.

Zhou Enlai: Time will prove everything. Both Mr. Eden's report to the House of Commons on the 23rd of last month and [British Prime Minister] Mr. [Winston] Churchill's statement in Washington referred to peaceful co-existence among countries. We welcome this. This is conducive to easing international tension.

Eden: After we left Washington, the US president also used the expression "peaceful co-existence."

Zhou Enlai: This shows that Mr. Churchill had some influence on him.

Eden: Yes, we had a long talk with him. Let's discuss these interesting questions after I return from Paris. Mr. Molotov and I agreed to a procedure where we would hold private talks without formal meetings, and I believe you must have known [about that].

Zhou Enlai: Yes, but we will have to hold a session at the end to conclude the conference.

Eden: Yes, if there is something to make public, of course, a plenary session will have to be held. I must say good-bye now, for Mr. Molotov is going to see me soon.

[1] The Colombo Conference, held 28 April-2 May 1954, was convened by Ceylonese Prime Minister John Kotelawa, and included Burmese Prime Minister U Nu, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Indonesian Prime Minister Ali Sastroamidjojo, and Pakistani Prime Minister Mohammed Ali.