

June 22, 1954

Minutes, Zhou Enlai's Meeting with Jean Chauvel

Citation:

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Summary:

Chauvel confirms a meeting for Zhou with the French Prime Minister, and suggests that both countries announce the meeting at the same time to thwart distorted media coverage of the two countries. The two agree that the conference must continue. Also, Chauvel hands Zhou a proposal for a special committee to decide the composition of the supervisory committee.

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

Time: 22 June, 11:45 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.

Location: The Chinese delegation's hotel

Chinese participants: Zhou Enlai, Li Kenong, [Director of the Department of Asian Affairs of the PRC Foreign Ministry] Chen Jiakang, and Dong Ningchuan (translator)

French participants: Jean Chauvel, Jacques Guillermaz, and one translator

Chauvel: I visited Mr. [Pierre] Mendes-France in Paris yesterday. I have conveyed to him your willingness to meet him. He is very glad. However, since his new cabinet has just formed, he has a minister meeting this morning, and a cabinet meeting in the afternoon. Therefore he will be able to arrive in Bern tomorrow. Right now we have arranged his schedule as the following. He is visiting the officials of the Swiss government at 11:00 am tomorrow morning. He is having a banquet at 12:30 pm. He can meet you at 3:00 p.m. at the French embassy. [We would like to know] if it is convenient for you.

The media and press have broadly publicized the news of this meeting. Some of [the reports] are distorted propaganda. We guess they are cooked by the Americans. I received many early phone calls this morning, asking for my comments on the news. I told them that I didn't have much to say, and that they should ask Paris for comments directly. In order to avoid any rumors, we need to have a formal announcement. Mr. Mendes-France is planning to announce his meeting with you to his cabinet members at today's cabinet meeting. After the cabinet meeting, we will issue a news release. Its words may be like this: French Prime Minister will visit Switzerland and meet the officials of the Swiss government. He will make a stop and meet Mr. Zhou Enlai, China's premier and foreign minister. Are you happy with the news release?

Zhou Enlai: Thank you for Mr. Chauvel's effort. I know you have many difficulties so that I delayed my schedule for one day. The street news is obviously made by the Americans. They spread the news everywhere. For example, about my trip to India. India and our government have not yet released the news, [but] they already found out [about it] in the airport.

Regarding your news release, I don't have any problems. It is all right to meet at 3:00 pm.

Chauvel: It is best if the Chinese and French governments can issue the news release at the same time.

Zhou Enlai: After you decide the release time, please ask Col. Guillermaz to inform [Director of the Staff Office of the PRC Foreign Ministry] Mr. Wang Bingnan.

Chauvel: Regarding the contents of tomorrow's meeting, even though Mr. Mendes-France does not have any particular topic, he will listen to everything you'd like to say. His mission is to quickly reach a peaceful solution over the Indochina problem. By the deadline he has set for himself he has to report the result to the National Assembly.

The problems we face now in the negotiations are the difficulties between France and its alliance. We think we will work out something with them. We are very glad to see that China and France can make common efforts together. After your departure, who is in charge here?

Zhou Enlai: Mr. Li Kenong, our vice minister of the Foreign Affairs Ministry, will stay in charge here. Also, Mr. Chen Jiakang, head of the Asian Division, will stay here. We hope that the French and Chinese delegations will maintain their contacts inside and outside the conference in order to make genuine progress through their efforts. I met

the foreign ministers of Cambodia and Laos yesterday and the day before yesterday. I also invited the foreign ministers of Laos, Cambodia, and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam to dinner here last night. I have told them that our hope is to see the three countries establish a friendly relationship with France. After peace is resumed, they will develop better relations with France on the new foundation. Our goal is to support both sides to achieve a glorious cease-fire. We support and promote the conference, [and are] not derailing it.

Chauvel: This is exactly what we believe. We really appreciate your great efforts and personal contribution to the restoration of peace in Indochina.

I think the main task for the next few weeks will be conducted in the military committees. However, we can't give the public an impression that the conference of the nine-nations [the Geneva Conference] has gone [away]. Thus, we feel that the conference should meet and show the media from all the countries that the nine nation conference is continuing. I talked to Mr. Pham Van Dong this morning about this. He said that we don't need to give this kind of optimistic impression. I think it may not be just an impression, this conference still has certain impact. If [there is] not much business, we can meet two or three times a week, and for one hour each time.

The special meetings can report the result of their discussions to the conference.

Zhou Enlai: I think Mr. Chauvel has a good idea. But we need to discuss this with the delegations of the Soviet Union and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. It is better for the conference to have some business to work on. And each person doesn't need to talk a lot, that might [only] intensify the atmosphere.

Chauvel: We will find some business for the conference to work on.

Zhou Enlai: It is important that the military staff meeting should have some achievement.

Chauvel: This is our common basis. I said to Mr. Pham Van Dong this morning that the discussion on the supervision [commission] and its membership does not have any foundation until the map [for regrouping] is drawn. It doesn't matter to you and us if the conference continues or adjourns. But it means a lot to some other people. Thus the conference must continue to meet.

We are planning to present two documents at today's meeting. The first document is about establishing a special committee on the supervision issue. The Americans are not very happy to accept this document. They worry that the conference may not be able to take control after such a committee is established. The members of this committee can be decided later according to its tasks. The second document is drafted according to Mr. Zhou Enlai's six-point proposal. We intend to use it as the meeting agenda in order to make the conference progress. Mr. Pham Van Dong said that we should add the issue of local troop deployment to this document. Although [Republic of Vietnam Vice Defense Minister Ta Quang Buu] hasn't given any specific replies, he doesn't oppose it. We want to know now about China's opinion. We can cooperate like we did last week.

(Chauvel presented an original copy of the two documents.)

Zhou Enlai: We will let you have our reply before the meeting and after our discussions.

Chauvel: Regarding the special committee suggested in the first document, we consider it the best if a delegation, such as the Chinese delegation, can make a proposal for establishing a special committee on supervision. Then we will endorse it.

Zhou Enlai: We need to study the document.

Chauvel: We hope that the French and Chinese delegations can maintain their active, careful, and secret cooperation during the next three weeks.

Zhou Enlai: This is to our own advantage.