

December 26, 1962

**Record of Conversation Between Chinese Premier
Zhou Enlai and Mongolian Leader J. Zedenbal**

Citation:

"Record of Conversation Between Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai and Mongolian Leader J. Zedenbal", December 26, 1962, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Stiftung "Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der ehemaligen DDR im Bundesarchiv," Berlin, JIV 2/202-283, B1.0. Obtained by David Wolff and translated by David Wolff and Christian Ostermann. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/112072>

Summary:

Record of conversation between Zhou Enlai and J. Zedeбал largely focused on the Sino-Indian border dispute

Original Language:

German

Contents:

Translation - English

About the Meeting of Comrade Zhou Enlai and Comrade J. Zedenbal

On 26 December the Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China [PRC; VRCh in German], Comrade Zhou Enlai, paid a return visit to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Mongolian People's Republic [MPR; MVR in German], Comrade J. Zedenbal.

During this meeting, which took place in the residence of Comrade Zedenbal, a conversation [took place] between the two [men], which lasted from 11 until 14 hours.

Present during the conversation were: on the Mongolian side--the deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the MPR, Comrade Shagwaral, the deputy Foreign Minister Schagda[r]suren, the Ambassador of the MPR in Peking [Beijing], Zewegmid, the Deputy of the Great People's Hural [Parliament] of the MPR, S. Bata, the Head of the 1st Division of the Foreign Ministry of the MPR, Comrade Tschimiddorsh; on the Chinese side--the deputy Premier of the State Council and Foreign Minister of the PRC, Comrade Tschen Ji [Chen Yi], the deputy Foreign Minister, Comrade Tschi Peng-fei, the Head of the 2nd Asian Division of the Foreign Ministry of the PRC, Comrade Zhou Tschu-je, the Chief of Protocol of the Foreign Ministry of the PRC, Jui Pei-weng, the Extraordinary and plenipotentiary Ambassador of the PRC in the MPR, Se Fu-schen.

Erdenebulag served as translator on the Chinese side and Adja on the Mongolian side.

After offering tea, fruit, and cigarettes to the guests, and after a short conversation of a protocol nature, photographs were taken and the guests entered a special room where a three-hour conversation occurred.

Hereafter follows a presentation of the contents of the conversation between the Premier of the State Council of the PRC, and the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the MPR, Zedenbal.

ZHOU ENLAI: We are very happy, Comrade Chairman Zedenbal, that you have come to our land, in order to sign a treaty concerning the border between our countries. This is a good thing, the meaning of which is to legally define the borders between our friendly lands.

Yesterday you said quite correctly, that the signing of a border agreement would be very meaningful for peace and friendship. A reasonable settlement of the border question between China and Mongolia will be an example and an encouragement for border negotiations with other countries.

Basically, we have reached an agreement concerning the border question with [North] Korea. But we are waiting still for an answer from Korea and therefore have not yet made a public announcement to the press.

Since the Chinese-Mongolian and Chinese-Korean border issues are already settled, all that remains to be done, is to set up joint Commissions on Demarcation of Borders according to the agreed-upon principles.

We are at present conducting negotiations regarding border demarcation with Burma and Nepal. We have the opportunity to resolve this question with the aforementioned countries on a mutually-agreed basis. In this manner we will officially pin down the

border line with these countries.

The border agreement between China and Mongolia will also contribute to the resolution of the border question with our other neighboring countries.

China recently started border negotiations with Pakistan. We think that [we] will soon reach an agreement as our negotiations with Pakistan are taking place in a good atmosphere. The border question with Pakistan is also linked to the Kashmir question, that is, with the question that concerns both Pakistan and India directly. After the conclusion of the negotiations between China and Pakistan, we will sign a provisional protocol; the signing of an official treaty will follow if the Kashmir question between India and Pakistan has been settled.

Anyway, the aforementioned border treaty will reflect the real situation. We are not going to define officially the border between China and Pakistan today. That would be to lead India into a dead end [Sackgasse]. The border between India and Pakistan is still officially unresolved.

When you visited India in [September] 1959, Comrade Zedenbal, the border conflict between China and India had just reached a climax. At that time, I informed you regarding the Chinese-India border question, but during your stay in India you tried to avoid this question. We are very interested in this matter.

The major border conflict between India and Pakistan is caused by the Kashmir question. At the western sector of our border with India, this [area] borders on the Aksai and on the Tibetan district of Ali. This was a historically established traditional border line. Pakistan's position on the border question is correct. The border agreement between our countries will undoubtedly be signed, once the status [zugehörigkeit] of Kashmir is clarified. India, however, is trying in every way to prevent the conclusion of an agreement. But these attempts lack any grounds.

The Western press--especially the English papers--write, that the Chinese-Pakistani border question corresponds completely to the norms of international relations. But this question only worries the American reactionaries. They think that if China, Pakistan, and India delineate their borders, that would be a blow to the aggressive Asia policy of America and other imperialist states. They assume that the solution of the Chinese-Pakistani border question and the settlement of the Chinese-India border question could hinder their aggression.

Recently the Americans have exerted increased pressure on India and Pakistan demanding a solution to the Kashmir question as soon as possible. It is expected that in the near-future negotiations on the border question will begin between India and Pakistan on the ministerial level.

The English are trying to influence these matters either in the direction that Kashmir belongs to both countries or that Pakistan connects itself into Indian society [dass sich Pakistan der indischen Gemeinschaft anschliesst].

We are of the opinion that the border negotiations between India and Pakistan cannot lead to positive results. Nehru is searching for a way to subordinate India and Pakistan to American domination. Clearly, he has no other way out [Ausweg]. If this occurs, the situation will become even more complicated, and it will become difficult to explain this problem to the Indian people.

We have sent a letter to the countries of Asia and Africa explaining the Chinese-Indian border question in detail. You have also received this letter, Comrade

Chairman Zedenbal.

Since 1961 India is conducting invasions into our border districts and has established 43 border posts there. The area in question is mountainous, has a raw climate, and it snows a lot there.

After the Chinese-Indian border conflict broke out and India continued its invasion systematically, we were forced to remove the aforementioned 43 posts. Several of these were overrun and the entire district cleansed.

On 21 November [1962] our government made the decision to cease fire and to withdraw the border units 20 kilometers into the hinterlands. We suggested the establishment of an unpopulated zone 20 kilometers deep [on each side--ed.]. One must say that in the past there were no Chinese troops involved in the border conflict. There was not a single border guard or [border]-post there, rather, only a patrol [service]. But, administratively, this district was subject to us [our authority]. Since 1949, however, India began to threaten and attack this area. Now, after this area is cleansed, we again have no border guard there. If India, under these conditions, begins an invasion again, this will be a true challenge and provocation.

If India gives up Kashmir to Pakistan and tries to annex our Aksai district again, this will only be a proof that India is really working for and under the orders of the Americans.

India's attempts to give Pakistan the rich, bounteous Kashmir and, in exchange, to occupy our unpopulated, poor district, only proves [India's] aggressiveness. Under these conditions, we have ceased fire and withdrawn our troops.

The people of Asia and Africa, [and] all the peace-loving people of the Earth, support our policy and our measures. We thank you for the fact that your government welcomed the explanation of the government of the PRC.

Presently, India is in a difficult position. The countries of Asia and Africa are supporting our proposal, and that puts India in an even more exit-less [ausweglosere] situation.

Not long ago, a meeting of leading statesmen from many countries took place in Colombo [Ceylon; now Sri Lanka] concerning the Sino-Indian border question. They decided to send the Ceylonese prime minister [Sirimavo Bandaranaike] to China in order to inform us of the results of the conference. It was confirmed that the Ceylonese Minister-president would arrive [in China] on 31 December. We have already received a special plenipotentiary in order to confer on this question. The aforementioned countries are making efforts to reconcile India and China and to initiate negotiations between our countries in order to confirm our cease-fire. We are ready to respond to these efforts. The most important [thing] is that both sides do not allow any renewed clashes. That is our main goal. Many ask, why there is no settlement of the Indian-Chinese border conflict, because the border question between China and Pakistan is actively discussed[?] We think that Pakistan negotiates with us without submitting itself to America and England, although it belongs to an aggressive bloc. India, however, speaks the language of America, although it maintains that it does not belong to any aggressive blocs.

J. ZEDENBAL: Do you consider India a neutral country?

Zhou Enlai: India is diverging from its so-called neutrality. Furthermore, there is a less important border question between China and Afghanistan. In short, we will start

negotiations. Experience shows that we can solve the border problems handed down to us by history through friendly negotiations both with socialist countries and with the new states of Asia. The treaty regarding the Chinese-Mongolian border demonstrates this. Both of our states are socialist countries and in a short period we have solved the border question correctly, according to principles of friendship, equality, mutual understanding and mutual concessions. Our countries' governmental delegations have successfully concluded negotiations over the border question. This opens the way to the signature of a border agreement. Consequently, we will have to form a joint commission that will undertake border demarcation on the spot.

J. Zedenbal: Thank you, Premier Zhou Enlai both for the information regarding the course of negotiations you are conducting with neighboring countries and for the information about your government's position on this question.

The negotiations between our countries to define exactly and mark the borderline have been successfully concluded, and nothing more stands in the way of signing an agreement. Comrade Premier, you have correctly stated that our countries' governmental delegations negotiated successfully on the basis of mutual understanding, mutual consideration of interests, mutual concessions and mutual regard. I value this as much as you do. Since socialist countries have a common goal and ideology, we definitely must solve all questions that come up between us in the spirit of friendship. The border question between our countries was settled on just such a basis. The goal of the peoples who are building socialism and communism is to eliminate once and for all such problems as border drawing and the like that divide nations from each other.

But for the time being borders will remain. I only say this, because I am taking our final goal, Communism, as my point of departure.

Zhou Enlai: There is a Chinese saying that says that in the end the world will be an unitary whole, that there will be no exploitation of man by man. But before we join in one whole, we must establish the borders and provide for our affairs and prosperity.

J. Zedenbal: The states and nations will strengthen their independence and develop their countries, consequently and definitely crossing over into a communist order. This is the dialectic of development.

Zhou Enlai: This is clearly a question of the distant future.

J. Zedenbal: Of course. Our government and our people deeply regret that there was a border conflict between China and India. They are convinced that this problem must be solved in a peaceful manner. That is our position. This conflict between two Asian great-powers and the disturbance of the friendship between them is disadvantageous both for the peoples of both countries and for the maintenance of peace in general.

Our visit to India in 1959 coincided with the heightening [of tensions] on the Chinese-Indian border. I remember, Comrade Premier, that you informed us at that time regarding the state of affairs.

As soon as we were on Indian soil, the correspondents fell upon us with questions regarding the border conflict. Our answer to the correspondents ran: we hope that the border question between these two great powers can be settled in a peaceful manner.

At the meeting with Nehru, I said to him that the correspondents had turned to us with this question; I assume that the border question between the two countries will

be settled in a friendly manner. At that time the question was, it seems to me, mainly about a border area of 90,000 square kilometers.

Nehru said that if it was a border disagreement involving a few kilometers, one could make mutual concessions, but that in this case it was a matter of 90,000 square kilometers, whose inhabitants are Indian citizens, who elect representatives to the Indian parliament. Therefore, he said, this question is not so simply solved.

It seems to me that, in fact, it is not easy to reach an agreement involving such a large area. A longer time is clearly necessary for this. As it turned out, the outbreak of the border conflict and the armed clashes have, in essence, complicated the situation. Now, obviously, an even bigger area is involved than before.

We think that the Chinese government's unilateral ceasefire is a reasonable step, taken after full consideration of the circumstances. We hold the view that you are undertaking flexible measures towards settlement of the Indian-Chinese border conflict in a peaceful manner by negotiations.

In general, life confirms daily the need for flexible policies to solve international problems. We do not doubt that the Chinese-Indian border conflict can be settled peacefully.

By "speculating" on the Chinese-Indian border conflict, the reactionary forces in India have strengthened their activity and their offensive against the country's [India's] Communist Party and democratic forces.

We are convinced that the measures that your government has taken towards a ceasefire on the Indian-Chinese border, toward the withdrawal of border troops and towards the future settlement of this problem by negotiation will generate positive results. We are of the opinion that this would be, on the one hand a blow against reactionary forces in India itself, and on the other hand a blow against the forces of imperialism, with the USA at its head. We assume that such measures will strengthen India's neutral stance and will prevent India from abandoning this position. This will advance the battle for peace in the whole world. The American imperialists are making efforts to derive advantages from this conflict. The peaceful settlement would undoubtedly be a serious [line illegible--trans.] for imperialism.

After the signing of the border agreement between our countries, we will begin the demarcation of the borderline. As is well known, during the negotiations our delegation raised the question of the village of Hurimt in the Balgan-Ulgiisk district in western Mongolia. Our inhabitants have erected several buildings there and begun lumbering. Your delegation, however, replied that this place cannot be recognized as Mongolia, because this would meet with difficulties. At the same time, your delegation answered that the inhabitants on both sides have come to an agreement and can find a reasonable solution [to the problem of] the use of the forest's riches. Therefore, I do not want to insist that Hurimt should necessarily belong inside Mongolian borders. Of course, I think that this question must be decided by taking both sides interests into consideration. We are grateful that you have declared yourselves ready to make possible our use of our buildings as well as the forests in this district. This problem occurred, because there are no other woods nearby. But it can be solved on the basis of friendly, mutual understanding.

Since the founding of the PRC it has become a good tradition that during temporary difficulties caused by drought and dry wind, the administrations of individual districts of our countries, in friendly contacts, have permitted the reciprocal use of pasture land. We hope that it will also be possible in the future, in case of difficulties, to continue this excellent tradition.

I suppose that our Comrade "Landowner" ["Gutsbesitzer"] Shagwaral, who is responsible for agricultural questions would be very interested in this.

We thank you for the help that you have provided in difficult times to the cattle-breeders in our Aimaks and Somons, especially in winter and spring. We also express further our satisfaction that the border question between our countries will soon be settled.

I would like to make use of this meeting, Comrade Premier, to broach two aspects [of Sino-Mongolian relations].

We were and are grateful that for the construction of our country the PRC has provided us with financial and economic help as well as qualified workers. The appropriate authorities in our countries are already negotiating regarding the building of objects agreed upon earlier by our governments. I suppose that these negotiations will continue.

I would like to pose the following two questions to you: First, has railway freight traffic gone down considerably in the last years? Maybe that is also an effect of your drought. We hope that railway freight traffic will go up in the future. The full use of the railway that will be built as a consequence of a three-sided agreement between us and the Soviet comrades is economically advantageous for our country, Comrade Premier. We are convinced that you will take this factor into consideration.

Secondly, one of the forms of help that you provide to us is the provision of workers from appropriate professions. This labor is a great help in the building up of our country. Recently, it has nevertheless happened that a few less conscientious and inexperienced people put down their work. I think you know about this.

[segment of conversation not printed regarding Chinese guest workers, particularly those from Inner Mongolia (Zedenbal assured Zhou that these are needed for linguistic, not nationalistic reasons); resettlement of Mongolians in China; Sino-Mongolia trade relations--trans.]

Zhou Enlai: With regard to China's economic help to Mongolia, we can discuss this tomorrow afternoon, since we have too little time today to negotiate concrete matters, such as workers, construction, trade and railway freight traffic.

I do not understand the word "regrettable", that you used regarding the Chinese-Indian border conflict. If this refers to India, it is correct. If you said it in reference to China, in order to make us out to be the guilty [party], then that is false. On this question there are differences of opinion among the fraternal parties.

We have undertaken considerable work to inform and provide explanations to the appropriate states and countries. The Indian side put us in an intolerable position. We were forced to take measures. India began a new invasion and set off a conflict. We rebuffed them, since it was such a serious situation. We have taken measures to defuse the situation. We have ceased fire and pulled out troops back. These are unilateral steps. There is no guarantee that this problem is definitively solved. The cause is the aggressive policies of the ruling circles of the Indian government. The Nehru government is wavering and turning away from neutrality. India did indeed declare non-alignment to aggressive blocs, but became ever more dependent on American dollars. India received 640 million dollars from America for military purposes. Nehru's government is turning away from the policy of peace. We must understand imperialism's threat and danger. In India itself, the domestic forces of reaction are becoming ever more active. India is turning away from the policy of

peace. Our country, however, ceased fire and took the initiative towards negotiations. The Indian government has not yet expressed itself regarding our proposals and the measures we took. Under these circumstances, I ask you to understand Indian-Chinese relations correctly.

The MPR, as is known, has entered the United Nations. Therefore, the circumstances must be understandable for you. India's representative in the UN is following the policy of the Western countries. India supports the Western powers' policy on the Hungarian, Korean, and Chinese questions as well as on disarmament. In this way, India is getting ever further onto the side of the reactionary imperialists.

You, Comrade Zedenbal, will probably agree with some of what I'm saying and disagree with part. I am not forcing my opinion on you. Further development will show who is right. Our policy is a peace-loving foreign policy that is guided by the principles of Marxism-Leninism.

J. Zedenbal: Our main task is the signing of the Mongolian-Chinese border agreement. This work is on the verge of a successful conclusion.

Clearly, the Soviet Union, the PRC and the other countries of the socialist camp play a major role in keeping peace in the whole world. The socialist countries have taken on the goal to contribute to the fight for peace, each according to his strength. Naturally the socialist countries are interested in the peaceful settlement of the Indian-Chinese border conflict. It is my understanding that our discussion takes this standpoint, as a point of departure. We and you both know that Nehru is not a Communist, but a bourgeois politician. But we and you both understand how important it is, in the interests of the whole socialist camp, to exploit the positive sides of individual bourgeois politicians. We know that your party in its long history has garnered much experience in the exploitation of the deeds of individuals, who are on the enemy's side.

The exploitation of India's policy of neutrality is very important for the socialist camp. We assume that this is what the five principles of co-existence that you, Comrade Premier Zhou Enlai, together with Nehru, proclaimed. It will be very disadvantageous for our camp, if in place of Nehru, a man such as [Moraji] Desai comes to power. Then there will be a danger that India will join an aggressive bloc. In general, we attach the greatest meaning to the preservation and exploitation of India's neutrality. I think you will probably agree with this. The Chinese-Indian border conflict is now on all lips, since in contemporary international relations every event, even if of local character, becomes widely known.

We think that the ceasefire, the pulling back of troops and the readiness for a negotiated settlement of the border conflict through negotiations, a readiness that you decided on after appropriate evaluation of the conflict and its connections to international problems and in consideration of all the complicated factors, correspond to the interests of the peoples of the socialist camp and all progressive mankind.

Zhou Enlai: The hitch is that the Nehru government represents the Grossbourgeoisie and is two-faced. It is correct that in the fight for peace one must also exploit the bourgeoisie. Nehru is however a representative of the Grossbourgeoisie. The reactionary tendency has the upper hand in the Nehru government's policies. We must lead a decisive struggle against him, we must unmask his treacherous machinations. In his pro-American policy, there is no difference between Nehru and Desai. Resumption of negotiations to strengthen peace will be useful. But the Communists see this question differently from other men. The Communist Party of England has differences of opinion with us on other matters, but on the Indian-Chinese border question, we are of the same opinion. It would be good, if in the future you kept this in mind.

J. Zedenbal: I understand that the Chinese side does not unconditionally insist on immediately incorporating a 90,000 square kilometer area on the eastern border, that this question will be decided in the future. Is that true or not?

Zhou Enlai: I already went to India with Comrade [Foreign Minister] Chen Yi in 1960 in order to settle the Chinese-Indian border question, but we returned with empty hands.

J. Zedenbal: The Chinese-Indian border question must not be solved only in the interests of China, but also in accordance with the interests of the whole international communist movement. Given this, I personally think that it would be somewhat better, if you didn't bring up the matter of the 90,000 square kilometers on the eastern sector of the border, but, on the contrary, support the development of class struggle within India in favor of socialism and communism, so that it can contribute to the strengthening of the Communist Party and the democratic forces whereby you would help to accelerate India's transition to communism. There can be no doubt that the border question will be resolved in the future. I repudiate the thought of your intending to weaken or undermine in any way the forces of the Communist Party of India. It would be absurd, if such an idea came into the head of a Communist.

The kindling of conflict and noise over some 5-10 kilometers of land will, in the end, result in the strengthening of the domestic reactionary forces in India and the fanning of nationalistic passions. This would affect the Communists negatively and be disadvantageous for Socialism.

You Chinese Communists are much more experienced than us, and tempered in revolutionary battle. I am only saying what I think about this question and how I understand it.

Zhou Enlai: (Becoming nervous, with altered facial expression)

If you are interested in the Indian-Chinese border question, please examine again the literature that we have provided for the Asian and African countries. Our government is not fighting with India because of a few dozen kilometers of area. We have made absolutely no territorial claims, only the Indian side has. One must understand this correctly. The essence of the matter is that the Indian side is trying to annex an even larger area on the Western sector of the border. How quickly India treads the path of socialism depends, above all, on the revolutionary struggle of the Indian Communist Party and the Indian people. It is important to expose to the world public the evil machinations and dangers, that the reactionary forces of India represent. If we do not expose their reactionary activity, they will go over to the American side, and that is even more disadvantageous.

J. Zedenbal: The main thing is not to play into the hands of American imperialism.

It was agreed to continue the conversation the next day.

29 December 1962