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Key Points of the Conversation between Song Qingling and Nehru

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Summary:

Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Song Qingling, former Chinese nationalist and second wife of Sun Yat-Sen, discuss Taiwan, Australia's position on China's entrance to the United Nations, and the impact of governmental censorship on Chinese foreign policy.

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[Handwritten notes in margin]

Circulate among: Li, Zhang, Wu [Xiuquan], Wang, Qiao, Chen; after reading, return to Zhang [Wenji]

Key Points of the Conversation between Song Qingling and Nehru
21 October 1954

After lunch, while the other guests went to the garden for fruit and coffee, I had the opportunity to talk with [Jawaharlal] Nehru alone. We started remembering our first meeting 27 years ago at the Soviet Union Friendship Conference in Moscow, and then all that had happened since then. We also remembered the several times he had been imprisoned for struggling against the British imperialists. I expressed the hope that 27 years from now we would still be standing on the side of the people. Then I asked him about the foreign news reports that he intended to resign, and expressed my deep concern for this matter. He immediately promised me: "I did this only as a provocation, to provoke them into consciousness! If I really make good on my threat, it will only be for six months. I will temporarily give up my two posts of prime minister and foreign minister. But I will still control everything from behind the scenes!" (As he said this, it seemed to me as if India was in the palm of his hand.)

After setting my mind at rest about the rumors of his resignation, I expressed the hope that for India's sake he would take care of his health. I recollected some of my personal experiences, recalling how Sun Zhongshan [Sun Yat-sen] had died from overwork and disappointment. I said that people have limitations. I said, if he (indicating Sun Zhongshan) had learned to hand matters over to aides to deal with and not taken everything upon himself, he might have lived to see the New China of the present. Later on Sun Zhongshan discovered his mistakes; these mistakes kept him from realizing his thoughts and ideals, but after he discovered them, he courageously took steps to immediately correct these mistakes. He decided to reorganize the dying and degenerating Nationalist Party, and to cooperate with the sole revolutionary force, the Chinese Communist Party, and the international revolutionary force of the Soviet Union, to strengthen his ideology. These reliable allies allowed him to envision a new China; this cooperation allowed us to win victory after victory in aspects where we had always suffered failure and humiliation. Reactionaries may hate us, but they cannot trivialize us; they don't dare to trivialize us.

Nehru agreed that people have limitations, and also agreed about the need for trained officials to help and to someday replace him. But he expressed doubts about allying with the Soviet Union or any other foreign country because "that would only cause confusion and make things worse." He said that everything could be achieved with patience and Gandhi's methods, as was the case with India's independence. He said that even between the Indian government and the British government, there had never been feelings of hatred. He mentioned negotiation and mediation as means of attaining goals. It was very clear that he wanted to act as mediator between China and other countries, and to carry out "[diplomatic] mediation" for peace.

At times Nehru appears naïve. He does not believe the United States establishing air and ground force defenses all over the world is really for the purpose of war. "Americans just bully the weak and fear the strong, that's all; they never really want to go to war because the American people are afraid of war." (I reminded him of the American troops in Korea, etc.) I replied: "Unfortunately, it is not the people that control the American government, but bankers and generals." I added that they are in fact extremely sinister and insidious; they just want Asians to fight Asians for them. I asked him whether he knew what had taken place in Guatemala.

Nehru told me of the conversation he had with Premier Zhou [Enlai] on the 20th of this month [October 1954]. Once more he mentioned using negotiation to resolve

Taiwan and other issues in Southeast Asia, instead of using armed force as we do now. I told him that Taiwan is an inseparable part of China; we cannot allow an arm or a leg to be cut off from the body of China. I asked him how he felt about Goa.

While speaking of some other matters, Nehru mentioned that the Australian representative Moss had once privately told some people that they were willing to accept the Chinese into the United Nations but were afraid of the United States. He said he had discovered our officials to be very ignorant about foreign politics (excepting our knowledge of the Soviet Union and New Democracy countries). He also said that we are completely cut off, because foreign publications are not allowed in, and then said, "with the exception of a minority of high-ranking personnel in your government," we [China] don't know anything about South American countries. He said, "they only let you know what they want you to know."

Besides talking about other things, he especially asked after Chairman Mao [Zedong], about his health, etc. I assured him that all the rumors were false. I assured him that there was nothing wrong with the Chairman and that he was in excellent health; otherwise, he would not be allowed to swim for several hours a day. I told him, the Chairman knows how to distribute work to his colleagues, and this way he has time to ponder every problem thoroughly before making a decision. I mentioned the Chairman's great kindness, his forgiving understanding, and that the criticism and self-criticism he taught us enabled us to progress this fast. I also mentioned that the Chairman wished to give every person a chance to correct their mistakes and a chance to turn over a new leaf. The Chairman's [fine] character left a very deep impression on Nehru.

(Above key points sent to Premier Zhou on morning of 23 October after being put in order by Committee Vice-Chairman Song Qingling. Original text in English.)