

July 30, 1955

**Instructions on the Sino-American Ambassadorial
Level Talks at Geneva (Excerpt)**

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Summary:

Instructions from the PRC Foreign Ministry to its negotiators at the Sino-American talks. These instructions concerned the PRC's basic policy, their attitude toward the question of expatriates, the US embargo against China, possible higher level Sino-American talks. Possible issues that could be raised by the US were also mentioned: The matter of US assets in China, the issue of shooting down commercial airliners, and the issue of cease-fire across the Taiwan Strait. Besides, the Foreign Ministry gave instructions on the attitude to adopt at the meetings as well as the need to constantly ask for instructions.

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1. The US government's proposal to hold the Sino-American ambassadorial talks is the result of outside pressure. The successful conclusion of the Four-Power Geneva Summit enhances this pressure. The publication of the Sino-American joint news announcement on the talks has been very well received. Many hope that the talks will relax tensions in the Taiwan Strait area. At present, Walter F. George, chair of US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, has proposed holding talks at a higher-level—at the ministers' level. Even people in power, such as [John Foster] Dulles and [Dwight] Eisenhower cannot openly oppose such talks. In his talk with journalists on 26 July, Dulles declared that the scope of the Sino-American talks would be broader than the previous talks at the consul level. The Americans are ready to discuss the return of civilians and the repatriation of US spies. He also indicated that the United States is prepared to discuss any issues directly related to Sino-American relations.

In line with the above circumstances, it may be inferred that the United States, at the ambassadorial talks, hopes that our country will release the eleven detained US spies and the issue of the return of civilians will be settled on conditions favorable to the US. Meanwhile, the US will not shut the door for higher-level Sino-American talks in order to probe our intentions. They aim to create a two-China status quo for the purpose of relaxing Sino-American tensions and improving their isolated and passive status in the Taiwan Strait area. If the ambassadorial talks go smoothly and outside pressure on the US continues to mount and, in particular, if our national defense power strengthens, the possibility of holding higher-level Sino-American talks and peacefully recovering the off-shore islands will be greatly increased. This is the prospect we strive for.

Thus our basic policy at the ambassadorial talks, at the outset, is to take initiatives to announce that "China had released eleven convicted American military personnel." [The purpose is] to liquidate any US pretexts, pressure the Americans in order to solve some concrete issues and lay a foundation for higher-level Sino-American talks. This will also create an isolated and passive situation for the United States on the issue of Taiwan.

2. In light of the above situation, we should propose two agendas at the first meeting on 1 August: (a) The return of civilians from both sides to their respective countries; (b) Other practical matters at issue between the two sides. Regarding the second agenda, we should indicate that each side may propose issues for discussion they deem necessary.

If the US side insists on the formulation of the news announcement, that is, "the issue of the repatriation of civilians to their respective countries," we may agree.

We plan to only discuss the issue of agendas at the first meeting. In light of our voluntary release of eleven convicted US military personnel, we expect that both sides will reach an agreement on the agenda smoothly. If the other side disagrees with our proposed agenda, we should patiently listen to their opinions. As to general issues proposed by the other side, we should tell them to wait until we discuss the second agenda. Regarding this, the method the Soviet Union adopted in handling agenda-setting at the Four-Power Geneva Conference is an instance for reference. As to the rules for the talks, open sessions are to our advantages. So we should strive for open sessions. It is all right to hold restricted sessions if necessary. It is unlikely that the other side would insist on closed door sessions at the outset. But if the other side insists on closed door sessions, we will voice no objection.

In addition, for the purpose of internal preparedness, we may take the initiative to suggest that the two sides hold meetings every other day. But after the first meeting

on the agendas, both sides should hold a meeting to discuss practical matters the following day. If the other side insists on meeting every day, we should agree. But after meetings on the first agenda are over, there should be a one-day recess. The meeting time from the second day on should be in the morning so that there will be enough time to ask for instructions from Beijing.

When discussing the first agenda, we should notify the other side of the conditions of eighty Americans in four categories: (a) Forty-two US civilians in China: Some have applied to leave China for the US, but others have not; (b) Twenty-seven convicted US civilians; (c) Sixteen US POWs who refuse repatriation; (d) Two convicted US military personnel (a name list is attached). Meanwhile, we should reiterate our policies toward the different categories of US personnel and notify them of the measures we are adopting.

[...]

Regarding the issue of Chinese nationals in the United States—we must point out that, after the Geneva Conference, the US informed us of the return of Chinese students on four occasions. Of the twenty-seven persons mentioned on the first three occasions, six have still not returned to China. On the fourth notification, i.e., 8 April 1955, we were only informed that the total number was seventy-six, but without a name list we have no way to verify whether they have returned or not. After approving the exit permits of twenty-seven US nationals from China, we already informed the US promptly and in detail. These people have all left China. Secondly, we should raise the following claims to the Americans: (a) The US should provide us with the number and a list of names of all Chinese nationals, including students in the United States. (b) The US government should revoke all prohibitions and measures preventing the departure of the Chinese nationals and students, including the time limit, which is a disguised [form of] detention. (c) The US should re-supply China with a list of the seventy-six Chinese students who the US granted exit permits in its fourth notification [on 8 April 1955]. (d) The US should agree that the US and China will each entrust a third country of its own choice to take charge of the affairs of nationals in the other country. First of all is the issue of their return. We propose India.

If the US satisfies our needs, we could move to Agenda II.

4. While discussing Agenda II, we must stress in principle that it is important for both sides to make efforts in order to relax tensions. On a concrete issue, we are going to propose the issue of embargo and China's preparatory work for a Sino-American negotiation mechanism, which was established at the time of the Bandung Conference, in order to relax and eliminate tensions in the Taiwan Strait area.

Regarding the US embargo against China—we may propose that it is unfair and irrational. We all know it doesn't work. The US embargo has failed to achieve its objective. But it is detrimental to the Chinese and American people and to all people of the world. We believe it is time for the US to terminate its embargo policy against China.

Regarding preparations for higher-level Sino-American talks, we are going to propose for discussion with regards to members, time, location, and topics. One tentative topic we propose is "to relax and eliminate Sino-American tensions in the Taiwan Strait area." While discussing this issue, we may suggest that both sides should propose their own topics for discussion at higher-level talks. The members of higher-level talks are Chinese and US foreign ministers. The location is New Delhi, but we would concede to Geneva if necessary.

5. We should be prepared to discuss various issues the other side might propose. US

journalists have speculated [about this] quite a bit. Dulles, in his speech on 26 July, stated that the US would propose “the issue of guaranteeing the safety of civilian airline flyers not to be shot down.” We should give attention to and have consideration for what issues they might propose for discussion, study the relevant materials, and consider our countermeasures.

At present, we are considering the following issues the other side might propose and our countermoves:

Should the other side raise “the matter of the assets of US nationals in China” we should indicate that it must discuss the assets of both sides in the other country because China has assets in the United States. If the other side insists on discussing this issue, we may suggest, because of the many technical aspects involved, that a separate meeting should be convened for this purpose..

Should the other side raise the issue of the shooting down of the Cathay airline flyer and the so-called issue “of guaranteeing the safety of civilian airliners not to be shot down,” we should point out that the shooting down of the Cathay airliner was purely accidental.^[1] Such [a] thing has not happened again since then. But US military planes have continuously invaded Chinese air space. The US side should pledge to stop it.

Should the US side raise the issue of cease-fire in the Taiwan Strait area, we should point out that there is no issue of cease-fire between China and the United States since there is no war between the two countries. If the US insists on discussing the issue of cease-fire and asks our opinions, we should raise the issue of the withdrawal of US forces from Taiwan and the Taiwan Strait area. We should also point out that such kind of discussion would not lead to an agreement because the issue of reducing tensions in the Taiwan area is a topic for higher-level talks. Each side should voice its opinion on any issue at the higher-level talks.

In line with the aforementioned speculation, should the other side continuously raise issues which could not lead to conclusion of an agreement in discussing the second agenda, we should ask the US to stop its interference in China and suspend sending bad elements to China to get involved in illegal activities.

6. The Four-Power Geneva Summit, together with the Bandung Conference, has improved international relations, creating favorable conditions for further relaxing international tensions and establishing mutual trust among countries. This is a new situation. Under such circumstances, we should adopt an active attitude for the settlement of international issues. We should adopt an identical attitude toward this round of the Sino-American talks. We should maintain a resolute stand and uphold a consultative and conciliatory attitude. Thus, we should respect each other and pay attention to courtesy. When the other side wants to speak, let them do so even if it is full of nonsense. We should first listen to his opinion calmly and then criticize and refute him with reasoning. We should welcome any positive elements, even if very small, in his speech. We should respond to the other side’s speeches and suggestions after careful consideration and study. As far as our side is concerned, we should avoid raising old contentious accounts and stress the importance of mutual efforts for relaxing tensions. If the other side raises old accounts, we should adopt a persuasive attitude for resolving the issue. In this regard, you are advised to study the formulation, wording, limits and spirit of each issue in Premier Zhou [Enlai’s] speech at the National People’s Congress.

7. Rules and Points for Attention at the Talks

1) Ask for instructions on every matter of the talk. Don’t take any unauthorized

action! Strictly observe the FM's rule of asking for instructions and reporting at all times.

2) Regarding each meeting, consider all feasible options and ask for instructions from the FM in advance in order to get responses on time.

3) After each meeting, promptly send the FM a brief report so that the FM might give instructions on time.

4) When reporting on the talks, check meeting minutes for accuracy. Don't exaggerate certain aspects or report only the good news but not the bad.

Form a negotiating team headed by Comrade Wang Bingnan, including Comrades Feng Xuan, Shen Ping [Acting Consul-General, Chinese Consulate General in Geneva], Lin Ping, and Li Huichuan to engage in all preparatory work.

[\[i\]](#) On 23 July 1954, a Cathay Pacific Douglas DC-4 aircraft while en route from Bangkok to Hong Kong was shot down near Hainan Island by the armed forces of the People's Republic of China.