

**October 23, 1954**  
**Minutes of Talks with Mao Tse-tung, Beijing, 23**  
**October 1954. Extracts.**

**Citation:**

"Minutes of Talks with Mao Tse-tung, Beijing, 23 October 1954. Extracts.", October 23, 1954, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Jawaharlal Nehru's Selected Works, Vol. 27, pp. 32-40. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/117817>

**Summary:**

Mao Zedong and Nehru discuss Chinese foreign policies toward war and peace.

**Original Language:**

English

**Contents:**

Transcript - English

Minutes of talks with Mao Tse-tung, Beijing, 23 October 1954. Extracts.

Mao Tse-tung: How the talks between the two Prime Ministers are proceeding?

Jawaharlal Nehru: We have discussed a great variety of questions and the talks were very satisfactory.

Mao: It is but natural. We have no quarrels between us. We had some quarrels with the Labour Party Delegation. We spent three and a half hours in talks with the Labour Party Delegation, out of which two hours were spent in quarrels. But we quarrelled happily. They then talked about a great variety of topics and they spoke of doubts and disagreements and we did likewise. They asked us whether we wanted to destroy or undermine Labour Party. I said we would not and we could not do so. If British Labour Party is to be destroyed, that is to say, if that is to happen then British working class should do it. According to their observation their course was better. They think they are socialists and we are communists and their road is better and effective. I said the question of your effectiveness may better not be talked. However, if you insist then we would express our views. Your policy, I said, would not reach the goal of socialism. You are still an imperialist country. They denied it. They asked whether we could cooperate with such sort of people. And I said entirely so. We said cooperation between two countries of different ideologies is entirely possible. Not only the British Labour Party but even if Churchill's Party wishes to cooperate we will also cooperate. We are also willing to cooperate with America if they want it. And there were some other matters of dispute. This was the Attlee Delegation. They were further worried (concerned) about our population being too large. They seem to have the idea that greater population would mean aggression. In our view our population problem would be solved under the new social system. It could be solved within the country. Does any of the South East Asian countries have the same doubts regarding our population?

JAHAWARLAL NEHRU: Yes. I mentioned last time that some of the South East Asian countries have apprehensions. Even in the past the Chinese and Indian populations spread out to these countries and so there is not only the fear of population, but in addition, of the strong nation behind it. But their apprehensions are not the same as of some European countries. This applies to India also. In Africa, European settlers are carrying on an anti-India campaign where they are describing India as "Indian imperialism" while actually it is they who are imperialists. I might mention that I met one or two members of the British Delegation who gave me a brief account of their talks held here.

Mao: Yes. We must talk out differences if any. That is good. Whatever places Labour Delegates wanted to see we allowed them to see. We do not favour Hitler's assertion, also made by the Japanese before, regarding 'have not' countries.

JAHAWARLAL NEHRU: Even before Hitler, Kaiser Wilhem talked the same way in Europe. About fifty years ago he had drawn a cartoon entitled "Yellow peril" in which he showed herds from Asia marching against Europe and he himself defending it. And by that probably he referred to Japanese.

Mao: Yes; ten years ago Japan was just this "yellow peril". Now we need at least scores of years of peace to develop our country and to raise the livelihood of our people. We do not want war. If we can create these conditions it will be good. We will cooperate with anyone who is in favour of this objective. India is undoubtedly in favour of this. So also Burma and Indonesia. Even countries like Thailand, we do not think, are contemplating aggression. We want to improve our relationship with the Thai Government, but Thai Government is peculiar. They do not want to pay any attention to us. Another case is that of Philippines. They all the same say that we want aggression, but they do not say anything when we say we want to establish and

improve relations. On the one hand, they say, they are afraid but when we want to issue something like a statement issued by India and China, about non-aggression, etc., they do not do it. We cannot find any reasons for it. They are depending on America and follow the same track. Speaking of the United States, in the last conversation there was one question we did not finish, viz. the question of war. Do you think that US wants war and would use war to achieve her interests?

JAHAWARLAL NEHRU: The Chairman has made many observations and I refer to some of them. Countries like Burma, Indonesia, and India not only support peace but they entirely favour peace. It is not only because peace is good, but out of selfish reasons. It is an absolute necessity. Otherwise all these countries face danger and destruction and it is an urgent necessity. There is no European country which is not desirous of peace and actively afraid of war. So is Asia too.

As regards US, the question is too difficult to have a simple answer. Because there are many elements in the US policy. I believe the majority of people in the United States want peace and there are many even in the Government who want peace. However, in the last few years there has been a growing tendency in US towards war, especially in the Defence Department and the military officials who have gained far greater strength in their foreign policy. Many of these high military officers think in terms of war but many in the civilian administration do not. Thus there is a conflict between civil and military administration's and many military generals openly talk of war. Eisenhower does not want war but he may be driven into it. He is weak and he does not understand politics. I happened to meet Dulles in Paris six years ago. Then the elections were to take place and he hoped to become the Secretary of State. However, in the elections Truman won and Dulles did not then become the Secretary of State. He then said that of course they did not want war but he thought war would come because of the aggressive activities of the communist countries. He said war will not solve any question or questions. It is ultimately the system which pays greatest dividends that will win. Of course, he was speaking in business language. What he meant was the system which will show greater results. Mao: Indeed, Dulles talked quite well!

JAHAWARLAL NEHRU: A man like Dulles is a great menace. He is a Methodist or a Baptist preacher who religiously goes to Church and he is narrow-minded and bigoted. He thinks every one must agree with him and a man like him might take any move. I had a long talk with Eisenhower when he was the President of the Columbia University. He then said to me that he had seen much of war and he no more wanted war. And it did seem to me that he meant it. But unfortunately he is so completely in the hands of third rate advisers that he moves from one opinion to another. In about one month's time elections will be held in America and I think Democrats will get majority in the Congress. It will mean a lessening of tensions and from the point of view of war it will be better. The only persons who think that they will really profit by war are, perhaps, Chiang Kai-shek and Syngman Rhee.

Mao: We must study the questions of the advantages of war. We have seen two Wars and we must study who profited from them. The last two Wars benefited three kinds of countries while all other countries suffered. We might perhaps classify them into three categories:

1. US imperialism: They profited by both Wars and made profits;
2. Countries led by communist parties or the working class; and
3. Oppressed people led by patriotic groups and parties who are still not communists like India, Indonesia, Syria and even Egypt.

If war comes people have to be mobilised and kept under constant tension but then organisation of the people gives rise to revolution as in China and India. By the way, do you call your struggle a revolution?

JAHAWARLAL NEHRU: Most certainly we do.

Mao: Our countries, China and India, achieved independence as a result of the Second World War. As a consequence of War another group of countries like Japan, Germany and Italy became weak. But some of the other countries who won the War also became weak. Thus, Chiang Kai-shek weakened and we stood up; Britain weakened and India, Burma, Egypt, etc., stood up; France weakened and Ho Chi Minh rose. I do not know what the American military groups have in mind. They are probably benefited and advanced by the two Wars and they think they will profit in a third world war. But as a result of the third world war it is not certain that America will be benefited and on the other hand she may find herself in trouble. Majority of Islamic countries like Syria in Western Asia and countries in Latin America and even perhaps America proper may possibly shake off the yoke of American imperialists. Revolutionary force of the people always needs a chance to come up. For example, the Bolsheviks. If they had no chance of the First World War, revolution would have been difficult. So also in China. We got a chance because of the Japanese War and we came up. This is also true of patriotic parties in the South East and West Asia. The real result of the Two World Wars is like this and in our view if a third world war is started, it will be to America's disadvantage. If a third world war starts, major portion of the world will be in a revolutionary stage. I am not saying it to make the people afraid but because it is really so as shown by the Second War. Coming to the weapons, US depends on artillery, navy and bomb. They think they are strong, but there is no basic change except that more people would be killed. In olden days they used "cold weapons" (i.e., knives, swords etc). Now hot weapons (rifles, guns etc.) are used. Cold ones kill less people and hot ones kill more people; atomic weapons will kill still more people. But besides increasing the rate of mortality they make no difference. In a third world war many more people would be killed. We have no atom bomb. I do not know whether you have it. We have just started scientific research and we have no money. We cannot possibly undertake it now. But atom bomb is possessed by both America and USSR. So, regarding arms, both sides are equal. The deciding factor is the people, the people who handle these weapons. Most important thing is as to what the soldiers think is to their best advantage. Communist Party like your Congress Party had no weapons to start with, but now we have. Another experience in both the World Wars is that countries on the defensive won and who started the War were defeated. In the First War, Germany marched as far as Paris to the west and Petrograd to the east. In the Second War also the defensive side won though Britain and France were a bit weakened; i.e., to say wars have not been advantageous to the aggressor. Therefore, our conclusion is that there should not be another war. We should have long-term peace.

JAHAWARLAL NEHRU: Chairman has been good enough to give analysis of wars and their effects. Chairman is an expert and his views deserve to be respected. I should say that there is a large measure of agreement between us on many points but with reservations on some.

(1) Even without war, India would have attained freedom. Actually war provided a pick-axe in the hands of the British to hold on for a long time in India.

(2) The US gained by War yet the position after War was not to her liking. USSR also had gained and America was facing many problems and although she had won, she was unhappy.

Chairman's arguments would lead to the conclusion that war though bad and therefore, should be avoided, still if it comes, should be welcomed. I venture to disagree about weapons. It is not a matter of quantity but of quality. It is not mere greater killing but more than that. For, the killing is on such a vast scale that America will not profit and no other counter will profit also. I am not an expert but I have studied science and I am in charge of the work on atomic research in my country. I have studied a little about some of the new developments in European countries. If a war starts it will result in the destruction of military and industrial centres of both sides. America thinks that they can destroy every administrative (governmental), industrial, productive and army centres of the USSR. Of course, Soviets also will not keep quiet. They too will destroy American centres. But the hydrogen bomb releases a chain reaction which is uncontrollable. The mere process of that energy creates another energy which will kill and none will be able to control them. The nature of war

will be quite different and it will essentially destroy the industrialised countries. I agree with Chairman's viewpoint that in final analysis human beings count. But third world war may bring in accompanying changes and enormous destruction and there might well be chaos. Again, if all highly trained persons were destroyed we cannot easily start again. I am saying from a purely practical viewpoint third world war will be quite different from the ones before. We cannot measure now its results. May be, there is no peace at all because there is no one (i.e., to say no organised machinery or government) to make peace. Of course, this is all guess work. China perhaps might suffer less because it is the industrialised nations which will suffer most, since there are nerve centres which can be destroyed easily. There is another aspect to be considered and that is the brutalising effect of war on humanity. War may result in degradation of large number of human beings. Therefore, on every count war has to be avoided. Chairman is right when he says that in the two Wars the aggressor was defeated and yet a little twist, speaking from a purely practical viewpoint, may have given advantage to the aggressor. Hitler was a foolish person and he lost many opportunities. It would have been better for him if he had been more patient and wise. In the First World War Germany was defeated but it was just touch and go. It was not so sure. There are many forces at work in the world and some are exaggerated by war, but some are exaggerated even without War. Even today British and French imperialism exist. Of course, European imperialism today is a dying thing. The French imperialism ceased after the First World War, while the British imperialism ceased after the Second War. It was hastened by war. There is no doubt about it. I do not think European countries are likely to continue as imperialist powers, because there is no strength left in them to do so. Their source of strength has dried up. American imperialism, however, is of a different type.

Mao: They (Britain and France) are not strong. But still they have colonies and semi-colonies.

JAHAWARLAL NEHRU: Yes, but they are weakened and there is no strength left in them. Only place they can hold on to is Africa.

Mao: Is Egypt still under British direction?

JAHAWARLAL NEHRU: No. The American influence is more than the British influence.

Mao: Our conclusions are equal (the same). Regarding analysis, we agree on some and do not agree on others. Prime Minister Nehru's analysis of facts regarding US, viz., that US profited on one side and is facing difficulties on the other, is very good. And also his analysis of weapons being qualitatively different-if we see the development of weapons there is the arrow stage, the cannon stage and the atom stage-this is also correct. But when I talked of war-about the result of weapons of war, whatever weapons are used-cold, hot or atomic and how large the scale of war may be the result is destruction of the other side. But truce was arranged on the 38th parallel. Here, truce was arranged without any power being totally destroyed. If you look back on past wars, in most cases the defeated suffered most destruction; the losing side lost not only men but also in material. So victory or defeat hinges on the scope of destruction suffered.

JN: May I venture to ask you a question? I should have thought that the scope of destruction suffered by the USSR in the Second World War was far greater than any other country, but because of perseverance it still won.

Mao: I was talking about final result when I said so. The German armies were totally destroyed, but the Soviet Armies were not. Again the Prime Minister's estimate that as a possible result of the third world war one may find oneself in a chaotic situation, this may be correct. It is also true that energy released by atom will destroy not only men but material, agriculture, and human beings in tens of millions. But if one

government goes away there will be another and as long as there are people men will always find a way out. The surviving people will also find a way to keep themselves alive. However, people at present are different from those in the past. There is a high degree of consciousness and aspirations for liberation and independence. This is so even in the US. So, in the final analysis it is better not to fight. If we act as Chief of Staff to Eisenhower, we would advise him not to go to war. (All smile): This work, however, can be more easily done by the Prime Minister (i.e., Nehru) rather than us. If we do it, he will think we are intimidating him with revolution and he will say: "I am not afraid of revolution."

JN: We cannot directly influence America. But we may be able to influence her indirectly through countries like Britain, France or Canada. I recently received a message from Churchill which in brief said that he was anxious over the tendencies towards war and he was trying to curb such tendencies in America. He said he was also thinking about the final admission of China to the United Nations.

Mao: Not only war but tensions also may seem to be to the advantage of those responsible for them, but they are disadvantageous to them. Is it after all better to let people have peace or to allow them to stay in tense situation every day? Tense situation everywhere will awaken people and will be helpful to revolution. Between India and China there is no tension, there is no psychological war. We do not spread psychological war among the people. We do not guard against each other as US and USSR do.

JN: In the United States the argument is advanced that they do not want war but they must keep up the tension so that the Congress will sanction money for the armies.

Mao: That is only one advantage they are considering but they are also making countries follow them by intimidation, building military bases, etc. It is not merely a question of appropriations. What do you think about convening a World Peace Congress? Do you think it is possible? Over a hundred nations all over the world can participate and there should be a sort of treaty for peace and non-aggression.

JN: Well, I cannot say. But with every passing year the possibility of war is getting less and if fifteen years pass without a war the possibility will be very remote indeed. Not that it is the people who will have changed but nobody would dare use such destructive weapons and a time may come when war would be avoided by a world agreement and mutual adjustment.

Mao: Is there any hope within ten years?

JN: Fears of consequences of war are growing and they will grow as the people know more about the weapons and after fifteen years the weapons will be such that no one dare use them for war. It would mean destruction of both sides. Of course, I am giving my assurances.

Mao: Naturally we cannot stand guarantee for what they are doing.

JN: If, for example death rays are invented, not to speak of nations, any group of people can destroy the world.

Mao: One thing is there that is fear of weapons, but there is fear of revolutions also.

JN: Of course. But weapons may be in hands of even certain groups. And as the science of communications advances there may be more types of guided missiles. There is, for example, a machine which plays chess. There might be created a

machine which can fight and of course a machine would do it more efficiently. As science advances rapidly it may give enormous power to a group or a small number of anti-social persons.

Mao: Finally we must work together for preventing war and for a lasting peace.

JN: Undoubtedly so.

Mao: We have just started our Five Year Plan. If there be a war, all our plans will be destroyed. We have spent all money on construction. If war should come we have to gather everything to wage the war and all construction will be stopped and war plan will have to come and it would postpone industrialization of China. Of course, it is difficult to sink entire China into the sea and so too India, no matter how many people are killed.[1]

[1] At the end of the minutes Paranjpe recorded that the discussions went on to subjects like evolution of humanity. geological past of India and China till dinner.