

June 18, 1954

**Record of Interview between the Right Hon. R.G.
Casey and Mr. Chou En Lai [Zhou Enlai]**

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Summary:

Record of conversation in the third person between Australian official R.G. Casey and Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai during the Geneva Conference. The report describes their discussion of the situations in Korea and Indochina and China's foreign relations.

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English

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Original Scan

CHOU EN-LAI

DraftRECORD OF INTERVIEW BETWEEN THE RIGHT HON. R. G. CASEY
AND MR. CHOU EN LAI.

18th June, 1954.

Mr. Casey began by saying he was glad to have this opportunity of meeting Mr. Chou En-lai. He understood that Chou had had useful talks with Mr. Eden and he thought that one of the good results of the Conference was the improvement which it had brought about in relations between Communist China and the United Kingdom. Mr. Chou agreed and said that this was certainly one of the good results. Mr. Casey said that large conferences like this one were not a very good way of getting business done. He thought that personal contact was very valuable. Mr. Chou agreed, saying that it made it possible to have direct discussion. Mr. Casey said that much was due to Mr. Eden's efforts at Geneva, in the absence of which very little might have been done here at all. Mr. Chou again agreed, with the correction that thanks were due to the efforts of both Chairmen.

Korea.

Mr. Casey said that he had found the results of the Conference disappointing. We had hoped that at least some modus vivendi might have emerged which would have allowed the situation to calm down and perhaps allowed certain commercial and other contacts between the two Koreas. However, things "had got bitter too early". He feared that North and South Korea were like oil and water and simply would not mix. Chou referred to the intransigence of the South Koreans, particularly to Mr. Pyun's statement of 17th June about the armistice. Mr. Casey agreed that this statement was regrettable.

Mr. Casey said that he could say that we, for our part, believed that Communist China ^{would} ~~should~~ participate in any future negotiations on Korea. He believed that Mr. Eden had expressed similar views to Mr. Chou.

Indo-China.

Mr. Casey brought up the subject of Indo-China. He said that the latest developments seemed encouraging and that we very much hoped that there might be a settlement there. The eyes of the world, including Australia, were fixed on Indo-China, and, if it were possible to get an arrangement there that was satisfactory to all parties, it would be a great step forward.

Laos and Cambodia were different from Vietnam. He asked whether Mr. Chou had seen the Laotian and Cambodian Foreign Ministers. (Chou laughed and replied that he had not, although there was a meeting ^{early} every day.) Mr. Casey said that he should: he was sure that he would find them convincing and reasonable. Both of them had assured him that the so-called free Laotian and free Cambodian movements were quite inconsiderable and had no popular support; and he was quite sure that this was true.

Mr. Chou said that China would be prepared to see these countries become "countries of the South-East Asian type", as he had told Mr. Eden. Burma had been mentioned as an example in his conversations with Mr. Eden, of which perhaps Mr. Eden had told Mr. Casey something (Mr. Casey confirmed that he had). China wanted to conduct its relations with all the countries of South-East Asia and the Pacific (including New Zealand and Australia) on the same basis as its relations with India. Chou interrupted the interpreter to add that China also wanted similar friendly relations with Japan, if there was no question of the revival of Japanese militarism and Japanese re-armament.

Returning to the subject of Indo-China, he said that he was sure that the Vietminh would be willing to withdraw any Vietminh "volunteers" there might be in Laos and Cambodia and to recognise the "independence and unity" of these two States. But the Governments of Laos and Cambodia had a duty to recognise the realities of the problem instead of ignoring them. The situation in Cambodia was different from that in Laos, where the popular movement was more developed. Mr. Casey said that Laos had offered to have elections after the

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withdrawal of the Vietminh: perhaps the same might be done in Cambodia. He did not think this need raise great difficulties. Mr. Chou En-lai agreed that elections were necessary. The first thing, however, was to stop the fighting.

In Vietnam, Mr. Chou En-lai said, there were two sides, the D.R.V. and the Bao Dai side. Here again, the first thing was to stop the fighting but there must also be elections reasonably soon. Mr. Casey pointed out that Vietnam was in a very disturbed state at present and that this would make the organisation of elections very difficult. He asked what time-limit Mr. Chou had in mind: was it something of the order of twelve months, or what? Mr. Chou agreed that the situation was disturbed and that some delay would be inevitable (but did not say how much).

Mr. Chou then said that there were three States in Indo-China. China thought that all of them should be free, independent and democratic (he interrupted the interpreter to add the last word). China wanted to see a settlement that would be "honourable to both sides". China wished to facilitate such a settlement. None of the three States should have any foreign bases in them. China would have to take notice of the fact if the United States should establish bases in ~~South-East Asia~~ (^{Indo-china} the originally said "Southeast Asia", and was interpreter used this term, which was corrected to "Indo-China" by Chou En-lai).

He went on to say that the United States was creating a ring of bases round China and that this illustrated their hostile attitude towards China. Mr. Casey said that he had no mandate, of course, to speak for the United States, but he felt sure that, if one side did nothing to alarm the other, the other ^{side} ~~side~~ would also do nothing. Mr. Chou grew somewhat animated and said that China had no bases: how could China create bases in Vietnam? Mr. Casey said that it might be possible for bases to be set up within China that could menace South-East Asia. Mr. Chou asked how bases

inside a country could possibly be offensive, whereas the United States had established bases in South-East Asia far outside its own frontiers.

Mr. Casey said that he supposed that it might be difficult for Chou En-lai to accept the fact that any such bases were purely defensive. Nevertheless, it was a fact. Mr. Chou laughed and repeated what he had just said.

Mr. Casey said that there was certainly no intention on this side to upset the peace of the world and Chou replied that there were certainly no aggressive intentions on the part of the People's Republic of China. He added that, so far as the South-West Pacific was concerned and American bases there, if it was only a matter of Australia there would be no threat.

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During the conversation Mr. Casey said that such questions as the recognition of Communist China and its entry ^{into} ~~to~~ the United Nations could not be discussed in present circumstances. He was sure that Mr. Chou had a good understanding of international politics and would understand this position. Mr. Chou said in reply that Mr. Casey would no doubt be aware that China had complaints, since she had been deprived of her legitimate rights in the United Nations; but he did not take the subject any further.

Mr. Chou said that he hoped that the improvement of relations between China and the United Kingdom might also help to improve China's relations with members of the Commonwealth generally. Mr. Casey replied that this would certainly be a factor. Time was a great healer and the Chinese people no doubt understood this better than most. Mr. Chou laughed and said that Mr. Casey had a great understanding of the Chinese spirit.

Mr. Casey said that the appearance of a Mendes-France Government in France might affect the prospects of a settlement in Indo-China. Mr. Chou did not reply directly but said that M. Bidault had said to him before leaving yesterday that France at least would not put obstacles in the way of a settlement.