

July 19, 1954

**Minutes of Conversation between Zhang Wentian
and Harold Caccia, First Meeting**

Citation:

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Summary:

Zhang and Caccia discuss three points. First Caccia mentions the French are primarily concerned with Route 9, and makes suggestions for this. Secondly, Caccia notes the French do not see elections occurring for another couple of years. Finally, Caccia makes clear that if an agreement is reached at the conference, there is no need for the Indochina countries to join military alliances.

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

Time: 19 July 1954, 1:30 p.m. to 2:10 p.m.

Location: Premier Zhou's residence

Chinese Attendees: Huan Xiang, Pu Shouchang (interpreter and note-taker)

British Attendee: Ford (interpreter)

1. The Question of the Demarcation Line in Vietnam

Caccia said that he had reported to Eden what Ambassador Zhang said the day before. Eden had conveyed the message to [Pierre] Mendes-France. The French side thinks that France has made considerable concessions in northern Vietnam, but the French side feels that "fortunately Route 9 does not fall on the 18th parallel."

Ambassador Zhang asked where Eden thinks a demarcation line is south of the 18th parallel that is acceptable to the French side?

Caccia answered that there were two major considerations on this issue:

The first is Route 9, and second [is the fact that] there should be sufficient space north of Route 9 to make those who use and maintain Route 9 feel safe.

Caccia said that there are two rivers between Route 9 and the 18th parallel, one of which enters the ocean at Dong Ha and the other at an unspecified location. These two rivers could both provide some protection for Route 9. Perhaps one of the two rivers can be chosen.

Ambassador Zhang asked whether Eden means that as long as Route 9 is safe, it would be acceptable to the French side?

Caccia said yes, but that the demarcation line should not be a preposterous line. Some topographical details must be taken into consideration, and thus a river is recommended.

Ambassador Zhang asked whether the French side insisted on Route 9?

Caccia answered that [this is] absolutely so. If this cannot be negotiated, we can only buy our tickets home.

Ambassador Zhang said that he would report Eden's opinions to the premier.

2. The Question of Date of Elections

Caccia said that he had reported to Eden the two solutions proposed by Ambassador Zhang the day before. He had also told Eden that the Chinese side was in favor of determining a date right now. He then said that based on the experience of Burma and India, it would take two to three years, and so it seems that the Soviets had promised an impossible task in their draft by proposing that the elections be held by the end of 1955. He finally said that the elections perhaps could be held in 1956, or by the end of 1956, or as early as possible in 1956.

3. The Question of Military Alliances

Caccia said that some British newspapers had run inaccurate reports of the Caccia-Zhang talk the day before, and so he would like to repeat what he had said. If an agreement could be reached here that was acceptable to all, and if the agreement

stipulates the non-entry of the three Indochinese states into any military alliances, then the British side believes that the three states will not be invited to join in any military alliances, and the United Kingdom will by no means do that. At the same time the UK believes that the Chinese side had the same attitude. Caccia went on to say that in saying so he represented not only the UK, but also the countries in the [British] Commonwealth. As to the United States, American representatives had clearly stated their attitude the previous afternoon, and this further proved what Caccia had said the previous morning. Ambassador Zhang said that we have the same understanding of what we discussed yesterday morning.

Caccia said that, as he understood, Laos and Cambodia would issue their separate declarations saying that they would not enter into any military alliances.

Ambassador Zhang asked in what way the two sides in Vietnam would express this point?

Caccia answered that this point could be included in the armistice agreement. He promised to check the armistice agreement to see whether this point is already included.