

July 17, 1961

**Memorandum of Three Conversations Between
Director Zhang Wenji and the Indian Ambassador
Regarding Sino-Indian Border Issues and the Two
Countries' Relations**

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Summary:

Three conversations between Zhang Wenji and Indian ambassador Parthasarathy, addressing the future of Sino-Indian relations, the Sino-Indian border issue, and India's policies toward Bhutan, Sikkim, and Pakistan.

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Memorandum of Three Conversations between Director Zhang Wenji and the Indian Ambassador [Gopalaswami Parthasarathy]

--- Regarding Sino-Indian Border Issues and the Two Countries' Relations ---

On 16 July 1961, Premier Zhou [Enlai] and Vice-Premier Chen Yi received Indian Foreign Secretary R.K. Nehru in Shanghai. At the close of the conversation, Premier Zhou suggested that talks be continued by Zhang Wenji, director of the Foreign Ministry's Asian Affairs Department Number One, and Indian Ambassador [Gopalaswami] Parthasarathy. In accordance with this suggestion, the two sides successively conducted three conversations. The key points of the [conversations] (two in Shanghai on 17 July, one in Beijing on 19 July) are as follows:

In the 17 July conversations, the Indian ambassador continued to probe into the issues of Bhutan, Sikkim, and Pakistan. [He] said India has the right to represent Bhutan and Sikkim in handling foreign affairs and [asked] about China's attitude toward this. [He] asked what China meant by saying it respected India having "proper relations" with Bhutan and Sikkim. Did China respect India's treaties with Bhutan and Sikkim, and did it recognize India's right to represent Bhutan and Sikkim in foreign policy? [He] asked whether the Chinese side would agree to talk if Bhutan entrusted India to discuss Sino-Bhutanese border issues. [He] said India is very sensitive about the Kashmir issue, [and] you are discussing border issues with a country that has no right to negotiate; it is impossible not to consider this hostile. From a legal standpoint, two countries cannot discuss the territory of a third country. Director Zhang said that yesterday R.K. Nehru raised the question of Bhutan and Sikkim under the subject of border issues. With regard to borders, there are no problems between China and Sikkim. Except for a small area south of the McMahon Line, there is not much disagreement on the Sino-Bhutanese border, either. I will state again that [China] does not cross the McMahon Line—the problem is in fact nonexistent. The ambassador raised the [subject] of India's right to represent Bhutan and Sikkim in diplomatic negotiations; this goes beyond the scope of border issues. We say that we respect India's relations with Bhutan and Sikkim. This is a general expression, [one] that is common in international affairs. We do not wish to damage China's relations with Bhutan or Sikkim, nor do we wish to damage China's relations with India. He personally did not quite understand why India wanted to treat Sikkim as a protectorate; this kind of practice is rare in Asian and African countries.

The two countries have not, in meetings between officials, discussed Sino-Bhutanese or Sino-Sikkimese border issues, because at the time the two countries' premiers were only authorized to discuss Sino-Indian border issues, and India does not that believe Bhutan or Sikkim are a part of India. The two sides' main consideration should be Sino-Indian border issues. Now India tends to sideline Sino-Indian border issues and instead focus discussions on such issues as Bhutan, Sikkim and Pakistan; this will not reduce [our] differences of opinion—rather, it will expand them. This does nothing to help resolve the issues.

The Ambassador said it would be difficult for both sides to reach an actual consensus on Sino-Indian border issues. His personal view was: Is it possible to seek a solution starting with ascertaining those points that require further clarification? Director Zhang said that based on the practical experience of Sino-Burmese and Sino-Nepalese discussions and negotiations, when two sides disagree on the facts, there are generally two methods for resolving the differences: (1) Each presents a factual basis and objectively compares them, looking to see whose information is relatively more logical, and finally parceling the [land] out to [the country] whose

[version] is more beneficial to the two countries' friendship; (2) [If] the two sides' views differ greatly and it is impossible to bring them into line, each can keep to its own position and consider, from a political standpoint, what kind of resolution would be more beneficial. The Ambassador said perhaps [we] can consider using the second method, with each side keeping its own views; depending on the facts of the situation, we will make some compromises and resolve the issues. But the difficulty lies in swaying popular opinion. He could not think of a way to overcome this political obstacle other than making a big gesture, expressing sincerity. But he made clear that this was just a personal idea of his. As to the first method—that is, the two sides reexamining the historical facts and practical situation—the Ambassador said that this is a very good method, but [I] don't know how much chance it has of succeeding. He felt that the two sides, in [their] official meetings, had only voiced their most extreme positions.

During the 19 July conversation, Director Zhang said that Premier Zhou mentioned that following reports by officials on both sides, the Chinese side thought of three possible methods which we deemed unsuitable or impossible to adopt; R.K. Nehru mentioned that there might be a kind of fourth option—which is, both sides agreed to reconsider [the issues]. He asked whether the ambassador could expound on this. The Ambassador said that the foreign secretary did not receive [new] directives or suggestions [for this visit]. The original idea was just to make use of the opportunity to exchange views on current Sino-Indian relations. When the Chinese side mentioned the three possible methods, the foreign secretary said there might be a kind of fourth method. [The Ambassador] thought that at the time, the foreign secretary didn't have any specific ideas, but was pointing out that the methods were not limited to three, that there might still be others, [and] we can think it over. This was just an exchange of views; [he] was not putting forward any suggestions on the Indian government's behalf. Director Zhang said that because Premier Zhou had expressed views on the Chinese government's behalf, before long we should be able to hear the Indian government's views and suggestions. The Ambassador said that the first step is to take the issues out of the icebox and look for a way to break the stalemate; it is now still difficult to make further statements. He personally felt that there might be the following few methods: (1) To make some kind of gesture that would do something to change the atmosphere; (2) to restore contacts at all levels; (3) to strive for mutually satisfactory solutions on lesser issues, and not adopt rigid attitudes; (4) to stop conceiving of each other in a hostile way, in order to create a favorable atmosphere. As to a fourth possible method, he felt there was no easy answer; at the time, the foreign secretary was just thinking in procedural terms—that is, how the two sides should restore contacts and reconsider [the issues]. Director Zhang asked the ambassador whether he thought it possible to start off by supplementing and revising Premier Zhou's proposed six points of consensus. The Ambassador said that judging from the statement released by the Indian government, he felt [they] had not yet arrived at this point. [We] need to give it further thought, [and for] the two sides to reestablish trust. It was just because of this that [he] hoped they could make an effort on other issues, propose some methods and talk to each other, in order to restore relations. Director Zhang said [we] hope that soon after the ambassador goes back [we] can hear the Indian government's views. The Ambassador said [we] can have further exchanges of views.

[Detailed memorandum of conversation already sent to Chinese embassy in India]

Copied and sent to: Premier's Office, Foreign Affairs Office (4), [National] Bureau of Surveying and Mapping, General Staff, [Bureau of] Investigation (3)

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