

July 19, 1961

**Memorandum of Conversation between Director
Zhang Wenji and Indian Ambassador Parthasarathy
(3)**

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Summary:

Zhang and Parthasarathy continue their conversation on how to solve conflicts stemming from the Sino-Indian border dispute. The two discuss the best possible method to bring about compromise and agreement between the two sides.

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Memorandum of Conversation (3): Director Zhang Wenji and Indian Ambassador Parthasarathy

Time: 19 July 1961, 9-11 a.m.

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Parthasarathy: In accordance with Premier Zhou's directives, we conducted informal talks. This is the most effective [means of communication]. The goal is exploring how both sides can further consider [issues]. Of course, neither side can give explicit answers. All possible methods discussed boil down to the following:

(1) With an objective attitude, carrying out another examination of the facts, taking the historical background and the actual administrative jurisdiction into consideration, and seeking out a certain method on a political foundation. Take the eastern section, for example: the northern part has close ties to China, and the southern part has close ties to India. [We would] approach the situation of each section objectively and seek a possible solution. You and I both think that repeating the method used last time, that kind of hurried official meeting, is not likely to be very effective.

(2) Each keeps to their own position, and [we] reconsider the issues and seek a political resolution. Both sides will, in a friendly way and by forgiving and yielding to each other, resolve border issues once and for all.

(3) Taking into consideration that there would be difficulties in carrying out the second method in a minimal time period, the two sides can temporarily put border issues to one side, and take steps to keep the two countries' relations from worsening in other aspects. [We could] consider some suggestions to ease relations, like the two sides having more contacts, etc.

Zhang: Premier Zhou mentioned that in regard to the officials' reports, the Chinese side had thought of three possible methods that we think unsuitable or impossible to adopt. The foreign secretary mentioned that there might be a kind of fourth option-which is, both sides agree to reconsider [the issues]. The foreign secretary did not have the time then to fully explain; I wonder if the ambassador would be able to do so.

The day before yesterday I talked about some of my personal, very undeveloped ideas; I don't know which fit with or are relatively close to the Indian side's ideas, or which are unacceptable. China has a proverb, "casting a brick to attract jade;" the ambassador is clear on the Indian side's position; [we] are willing to listen to the ambassador's opinions on what steps to take in terms of reconsidering [the issues]. What are the ambassador's wise views?

Parthasarathy: The foreign secretary has not received directives and suggestions for this visit. The original idea was just to make use of the opportunity to exchange opinions on the current Sino-Indian relationship. When the Chinese side mentioned three methods that might be adopted and the foreign secretary said there might be a kind of fourth method, I think that at the time he didn't have any specific ideas in mind at all, but was pointing out that the methods were not limited to three, that there might be others, and that [we] could first consider this and see what steps might be taken. I think that at the time, the foreign secretary just wanted to exchange opinions, and was not in any way presenting any suggestions on the Indian government's behalf. We, too, are also only exchanging opinions; we haven't been authorized to take any steps. When I summarized the main contents of the discussions just now, it was only to illustrate a train of thought. I cannot yet say anything now; I need to report to my country. I think these two days of discussion have been valuable: we cleared up the atmosphere, and both sides voiced their own

views candidly. Everyone agreed that the two countries' relations should be restored, [and we] should explore what steps to take. These are the gains of these two days. In sum, there should be further talks. We think that the several possible methods that you and I spoke about are not mutually exclusive, but that one method may lead to another. [We] must ponder the practical likelihood further.

Zhang: I agree with the ambassador's statement. Outside of what Premier Zhou, on behalf of the Chinese government, has already discussed with the foreign secretary, the conversations between us are just free exchanges of ideas. Just now the Ambassador said that the foreign secretary was not at all authorized to present China with suggestions, but to understand China's ideas through conversations with China's leaders, and must reconsider the issues after reporting back to the Indian government. I think since Premier Zhou has already expressed views on the Chinese government's behalf, before long we should be able to hear the Indian government's views or suggestions. I would like to ask very candidly: Does the ambassador personally believe that the Indian government wants to actively take any steps to resolve the issues? I am raising this question because Prime Minister Nehru once said that following the release of the official reports, that unless China accepts India's demands, there is no possibility of talks. The foreign secretary also said it is necessary for the two sides to have a foundation upon which to talk. I'm not clear on how the two sides can have a foundation if they don't talk, and the Indian side says there can be no talk without a foundation. The Indian government makes general statements that it hopes to resolve the issues, but what of specific methods?

Parthasarathy: The question is complex. The foreign secretary's talks with Premier Zhou reflect [the fact that] both sides have some anxieties and misunderstandings. For example, on the issue of criticism in the newspapers, both sides felt hurt. The Indian side also had the impression that China wanted to stay locked in a stalemate. Thus the question cannot be considered one-sidedly. You mentioned general statements; Prime Minister Nehru said not long ago that the two countries of China and India cannot stay locked in long-term mutual confrontation, and that the issues cannot always be kept in the icebox. As to the specific ways, that is quite difficult. You spoke very rightly: It seems that neither side has raised constructive suggestions. You [all] raised the six points of consensus-we did not accept [them], but that does not mean we are not considering [them]. 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.

Zhang: The two governments' positions differ greatly, but since both sides want to resolve the issues, we must seek out points of consensus, and not points of difference; [we] should always take active steps. The Chinese side has already put forward the six points of consensus; perhaps there are some clauses or wording with which the Indian side feels it cannot agree. Only if the Indian side can put forward positive opinions can we pursue forgiveness and understanding, and the two sides get closer. Regardless of what suspicions the Indian side has toward China-like suspecting China doesn't wish to resolve the issues, etc.-the suspicions can only be proven baseless through action. We have many times expressed our willingness to talk, and also always put forward positive suggestions. If China wanted to stall, it would never take these kinds of positive steps. The Indian side may feel this is still not enough-then, just look at the facts. As far as our side is concerned, [we] have always shown with statements and actions that we are true to our position.

Parthasarathy: Our two sides can both put our ideas and train of thought out there [for the other to see]; this is very good. I personally think 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 imagining the other in a hostile way-for example, you [all] do not think we are conducting anti-Chinese campaigns, we do not think you are slandering us, etc.-to create a favorable atmosphere. Of course, there are some problems that can't be resolved immediately; this is a long-term issue.

In regard to some sort of fourth option, I think there is no simple answer here. The foreign secretary was saying, what should we do as a next step? At the time, he was just thinking in procedural terms, how the two sides should restore contacts. As to the substantive issue, you asked just now if the Indian side was willing to resolve the issues. I think our two sides should have a basic trust; both sides wish to resolve the issues, if not today, then tomorrow. There are differences of opinion between us, but both sides are sincere. We [can] restore contacts in some aspects and reconsider [the issues]. This is my idea; it is difficult to give an explicit answer, [and I] am willing to have a further exchange of opinions.

Zhang: There are difficulties, it's true. [We] must make further considerations and exchanges of opinion, to stop the two countries' relations from worsening. To be sure, in this period there is mutual criticism and stalling over minor issues in diplomatic relations, but as long as both sides have the will, the situation can be improved. The ambassador has researched Chairman Mao's writings, and is sure to know that we have consistently adhered to two principles in handling relations with others. The first is, "do not be the first under heaven," that is to say, do not take the first step in causing harm. The second principle is, "it is improper to take but not to give," that is to say, if others treat us unfairly, we cannot fail to give answer. Likewise, if others are good to me, I will be even better to them in return. If we look back at the facts of the situation, I'm afraid one is hard put not to recognize that India's criticisms of China were far more numerous than our criticisms of India; it is all right to have differing opinions in this area, but it is best if the leaders of the two countries stay behind the frontlines. In terms of the two countries' diplomatic documents, India's protests to [China] have also far outnumbered our protests to India. I also don't wish to play the arithmetic game, and hope that after today both sides improve their practices. A certain amount of time is needed in terms of resolving border issues; for some other minor issues we can make immediate changes. I am not pointing the finger at anyone, [just] hoping that the two countries' relations [can] be improved.

Parthasarathy: What troubles me is the hidden insinuation in Chinese newspapers' criticisms that there have been changes in India's basic domestic and foreign policy. It's true that in terms of amount, Indian newspapers' criticisms outnumber the Chinese, but most of the criticisms are limited to border issues. I want to raise a candid question: Premier Zhou presented the six points of consensus; now that the two sides have held official meetings, and Indian officials have raised arguments [concerning them], will it have any effect on [the Six Points]? If you were to present them again, would the content and wording of the Six Points not be changed or revised at all from what they were-would they not have been affected at all by [those] few talks?

Zhang: I don't know the government's considerations, and I can't speak on the government's behalf. Personally, I believe that in terms of the major aspects, our position is completely correct. I must say that some of the information and conclusions presented by the Indian side were surprising and unusual, although I have respect for India's representatives. Following the two sides' official meetings, [if] Premier Zhou's six points of consensus are not thrown out, there is the possibility of supplementing and perfecting [them]. As to China's view of India, [our] overall

assessment is based on the approach of seeking truth from facts. We take a case as it stands, judging a thing on its own merits. We still speak well of the good aspects, and give them our support. As for certain disagreements, it is perhaps unavoidable they will show in public opinion too, but this does not hinder us from international cooperation; for example, on the issue of Laos, the foreign secretary promised that India's foreign policy had not changed in 15 years-and if it has not in fact changed, then there's no need for worry, [since] we seek the truth from facts.

Parthasarathy: We are not worried at all, we know what to do, but hope there won't be an increase in animosity between the two sides.

Zhang: [As] Ambassador Pan mentioned in the written conversation with the Indian Foreign Secretary, our enemies are in the east. Recently Chairman Liu also made mention, in a conversation with foreign guests, of "not disliking to have many friends, and not disliking to have few enemies." India is a great nation with a long history; why would we want to offend India? No matter what, one can see that disharmony between the two countries has no advantages for either side. China has a saying: "when the snipe and the clam grapple, it is the fisherman who stands to profit." Does the ambassador think it possible to start off by supplementing and revising Premier Zhou's proposed six points of consensus?

Parthasarathy: It is very difficult to say. [As] I just said, regarding these six points-it is the fifth point in particular that is the core of the problem-India cannot accept [them]. Frankly speaking, judging from the statement released by the Indian government, I think we have not yet arrived at this point. [We] need to give it further thought, [and for] the two sides to reestablish trust. It is just because of this that [we] hope to make some efforts on other issues, propose some methods and talk to each other, in order to restore relations. It could be said that in the past the two sides talked back and forth at, not with, each other. Although the two sides' differences are great, I am still optimistic. Resolving issues takes some time.

Zhang: From a long-term point of view-from a historical point of view-some small difficulties are temporary phenomena. The ambassador knows China's approach to overcoming difficulties. When things are at their most difficult, we are still always optimistic. The difficulties between China and India are very small; this is not to make light of these difficulties, but considered in terms of the entire world and of long-range history, the differences of opinion are not very great. We all have confidence [we can] overcome domestic and foreign difficulties. After the ambassador returns to his country, [we] hope he will make efforts to improve the situation; we will make efforts on our side as well. We hope that soon after the ambassador goes back [we] can hear the Indian government's views.

Parthasarathy: [We] can have further exchanges of views.