

January 4, 1955
Minutes of Conversation between Premier Zhou Enlai and Soviet Ambassador Pavel Yudin regarding Dag Hammarskjöld's Trip to Beijing

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Summary:

The Soviet ambassador brought to Zhou Enlai a telegram between the United Nations Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld and the UN Assistant Secretary-General. The telegram stated that Hammarskjöld was going to visit Beijing for negotiating the release of the US pilots who had served in the Korean War and been captured by the Chinese.

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Minutes of Conversation between Premier Zhou and Ambassador Pavel Yudin, 20:00 4 January 1955

Ambassador Pavel Yudin stated: Prior to leaving New York, United Nations Secretary General [Dag Hjalmar Agne Carl] Hammarskjold once had a conversation with United Nations head secretary assistant Comrade Chernov [sic] (Soviet personnel). Now Comrade [Vyacheslav] Molotov is telling Premier Zhou the main points of the conversation between Comrade Chernov and [Dag] Hammarskjold. Comrade Molotov said that the reason why [Dag] Hammarskjold told Chernov the purpose of his visit to Beijing is because he knows that the conversation content will be passed on to Beijing.

The following is the telegram text from Moscow:

Our comrade Chernov, who is assistant to the head secretary of the United Nations, once had a conversation with [Dag] Hammarskjold prior to his trip to Beijing.

Hammarskjold initiated to copiously explain the purpose of his trip to Beijing. The main content of what was said can be [text illegible] as follows:

He believes that under the current conditions of the United Nations, that is to say the condition of having no consensus between countries in the [United Nations] Security Council with the [text illegible] majority on one hand and the [text illegible] on the other hand; the United Nations Secretary General plays a decisive and independent role. As Secretary General, he cannot simply act as the enforcer of resolutions passed by the majority in the United Nations General Assembly. [Dag] Hammarskjold does not intend to enforce [text illegible], because this policy can only reflect the interests of the majority and is detrimental to the interests of the minority. In addition this does not help in solidifying and maintaining peace. Therefore, today he will eagerly enforce this policy that is possibly not in accord with the majority; however this will be in the direction towards the easing of the tense international situation. He asked me (Chernov), is the "philosophy" that he had just described correct? I (Chernov) answered: according to me it is correct. At the same time, I added a line: In the past [Trygve] Lie (the former United Nations Secretary General) held the other kind of understanding and we all know the outcome that he received.

[Dag] Hammarskjold claimed that there is a great difference between his direction and the direction of the former Secretary General. At that time he did not agree with [Trygve] Lie's policy, and will never [text illegible] [Trygve] Lie's policies. [Dag] Hammarskjold said, it is because of his own view of what the role of Secretary General is that he decided to intervene in the case of the American pilots. According to him because of this case, the abnormal relationship between China and the United States became even more tense; this helps to resolve the issue of China's admission into the United Nations.

It seems that [Dag] Hammarskjold's trip to Beijing to meet with Zhou Enlai is due to his own decision. According to him, even if the United Nations General Assembly does not pass a resolution agreeing to allow the Secretary General to handle the case of the American pilots, he will still make this trip. It seems that for this reason he did not send that United Nations resolution to the Beijing government.

[Dag] Hammarskjold seems to understand the difficulty and intricacy of his duty quite well, and he very rarely holds optimistic views. He wrote down the three possible outcomes of his trip to Beijing:

(1) After a series of considerations by Zhou Enlai, including the interests of China's internal politics, [Zhou Enlai] never intended to discuss the issue of the pilots. [Dag] Hammarskjold's plan completely fails and it becomes a huge blow to his credibility of attempting to become a Secretary General that enforces policies in the interest of the United Nations and the whole world.

(2) Zhou Enlai discusses the issue of the pilots but at the same time he produces judicial and other materials to show the crime of the pilots. If this is the case then [Dag] Hammarskjold says he seems to have all the evidence required for a rebuttal. This would be (A) All the pilots were shot down within the borders of Korea. (B) All the pilots wore military uniform, and none of them speaks Chinese; this point alone is sufficient to prove that they did not come to China to conduct espionage activities. (C) They all once fought on the side of the United Nations (Dag Hammarskjold once attempted to explain that he does not agree nor does he intend to defend the views of the majority of the countries which is that the [Korean] war was conducted by the United Nations. Regardless of whether or not he doubts this view, from a legal perspective the truth is such [that the pilots fought for the United Nations]. (D) All the equipment on the aircraft seems to show that the plane was attempting to accomplish purely military missions.

(3) Zhou Enlai might express willingness to seek some kind of political resolution for the pilot issue. This kind of case, even if it is impossible to reach agreements on all issues, will allow the United Nations Secretary General to feel satisfied. This is because he never intended to conduct negotiations on purely legal grounds, [legal arguments] seems to be for usage as a last resort. [Dag] Hammarskjold hopes that Zhou Enlai, as a genuine national actor, will definitely walk the political path. Although perhaps this meeting will not yield any results, but it will not nail the door shut either; this is convenient for future diplomatic negotiations. [Dag] Hammarskjold believes that if he can receive that kind of result then it would be greatly beneficial regardless of if it is beneficial towards China or beneficial towards the common work of easing the tense international situation. Therefore, [Dag] Hammarskjold viewed Zhou Enlai's reply to his telegram in that view; he believes [Zhou Enlai's] reply is a positive sign and hopes that great benefits will arise in the future from personal interactions with Zhou Enlai.

Finally, [Dag] Hammarskjold said, he plans to stay in Beijing for four or five days followed by a trip to Tokyo; and then he will proceed to San Francisco via Honolulu. We believe [Dag] Hammarskjold told Chernov these things because he wants the government of the People's Republic of China to know these things."

Other than the above, Ambassador [Pavel] Yudin also told Premier Zhou the following, which is: Na-lan-ya [sic] (Indian) who is a section head of the United Nations Security Council from some Asian country once said: The Americans are pressuring [Dag] Hammarskjold to not bring any Indians when he goes to Beijing. [Dag] Hammarskjold once expressed that he wants to bring Indian ambassador [text illegible]. [Dag] Hammarskjold once mentioned the request to the Indian government but India refused his request and said that any official personnel from India can not participate in this trip [to Beijing]. Na-lan-ya believes that [Dag] Hammarskjold's plan to travel to Beijing was issued by the Americans.