

September 9, 1959

Meeting Minutes between Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Hanfu and Ambassadors from Fraternal Countries on the Tibet Issue

Citation:

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Summary:

Chinese Vice Foreign Minister convened a meeting with ambassadors from several countries to discuss the Tibet issue. Zhang accused India of trying to wage an anti-Chinese campaign, presented several documents and maps as well as explained the history of the dispute.

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

Guests: Ambassadors and Interim Charge d'affaires of Various Countries to China

Recipient: Zhang Hanfu, the Vice Minister

Attendee: Zhang Wenjin, Head of the First Department of Asian Affairs

Interpreter: Li Yueran

Clerk: Li Chaoqing

Time: 9 September 1959, 4:30 p.m.

Location: Meeting Room, East Building, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Abstract: Vice Minister Zhang Hanfu introduced the border disputes between China and India to the ambassadors and interim charge d'affaires of various countries to China.

Vice Minister Zhang Hanfu: I am sorry to take your time here today. Following the emergence of the Tibet issue, in the past one month India has initiated the second round of an anti-China campaign. Indian newspapers and radio broadcasts and Nehru have spread a lot of anti-China views, and the imperialist countries have also kept talking about this issue. However, our government has not even expressed an opinion and our newspapers and radio stations have been silent about this. Some unreasonable demonstrators even cursed China as part of imperialism in front of the Chinese Embassy and consulates in India. We can no longer tolerate [this] and we feel obligated to tell you all the truth. We also have two documents to distribute to you all, including one letter that Premier Zhou [Enlai] wrote to Nehru in reply to his letter dated 22 March together with some other relevant documents. I will distribute this letter to you and then I will offer some explanations.

In the letter, Premier Zhou illustrated clearly the truth and history of the Sino-Indian border dispute and the stance of the Chinese government. As Premier Zhou states, China is justified in this issue while India is unreasonable and groundless. I do not want to repeat what is written in the letter. I will share with you some maps so that you can have a better understanding of the letter.

The western border between China and India, i.e. one strip to the west of the border between China, India, and Nepal and reaching the Karakorum [Kala Kunlun] Mountains on the north, and including the border between China and the Indian occupied Kashmir, is not yet demarcated. The regions that relate to this border include Western Tibet and Southern Xinjiang in China. The green lines on the map are the dividing lines marked on India's maps, and include an area of about 38,000 square kilometers of southwest Xinjiang in Indian territory. The Chinese Xinjiang-Tibet Highway passes through this region. Nehru also said that India did not have any administration over this region. However, Indian patrollers have frequented this region and we have sent them back every time. If any of them refuse to withdraw, we disarm them and drive them away according to international practices. Nine places in this region used to be occupied by Indian troops and we have persuaded them to withdraw through diplomatic approaches instead of armed conflict. The Chinese government has set up an administration in Wure [Bara Hoti] but India says this is within Indian territory. However, we will still try to settle this dispute through a diplomatic approach and recommend a joint investigation. We have sufficient evidence to prove that Wure is part of China. But India does not agree to our proposed joint investigation and the settlement of the dispute has been delayed for four years. They have also dispatched police in disguise into this region. I am not going to elaborate on this anymore. All of this proves that India is trying to unreasonably usurp our border territories. Even Nehru acknowledged that the dividing line of one strip of this region had not been demarcated (in a meeting not long ago). This is the end of my introduction to the western border dispute.

The eastern border starts at the frontier of Bhutan in the west and ends at the frontier of China in the east. The red lines on the map have been on Chinese maps

historically. The so-called McMahon Line is to the west of the [red] lines. The region of Tibet to the south of the McMahon Line covers an area of about 90,000 square kilometers, which is equivalent to the size of Zhejiang Province. We used to request that India return this territory. Please note that the purple line is drawn on the Indian map and it is farther south into Chinese territory compared with the McMahon Line. India has attempted to succeed the so-called McMahon Line as proposed by Britain, but we think this line is illegal and groundless. It is a product of imperialist Britain's invasion of Tibet. Chinese leaders, including Yuan Shikai, Jiang Jieshi and the People's Republic of China, have never acknowledged such a line. This line was determined to be part of China during the Simla Conference in 1913 to 1914. The local Tibetan government and the British government discussed and determined this. [Sir Henry] McMahon, representative of the British government, Lonchen Shatra [Lunxing Xiatuola], representative of the local Tibetan government, and Chen Yifan [Ivan Chen], representative of Yuan Shikai's government, all attended the conference. The subjects of the conference included the borders between China and India and the division of Tibet into Inner Tibet and Outer Tibet. Actually, the border issue between China and India was not discussed at the conference. Britain intended to invade Tibet and divide Tibet into Inner Tibet and independent Outer Tibet. The so-called McMahon Line was never discussed at the Simla Conference. Instead, Britain and the representative of the local Tibetan government secretly signed a pact in Delhi, instead of Simla, on 24 March 1914, which the Central Government of China was unaware of. This is how the McMahon Line came into being. As the border between Tibet and foreign countries was not the subject of the Simla Conference, the borders with Bhutan and Sikkim were not demarcated at that time. However, Britain secretly put the McMahon Line on this map, which nevertheless does not prove Chinese recognition of Indian sovereignty over this region. With regard to the Simla Accord, the representative of the former Chinese government did not sign it formally. Instead, only representatives of Britain and the local Tibetan government signed it. Therefore, we have all the evidence to justify the groundlessness and illegitimacy of the McMahon Line. Britain did not cross the McMahon Line during its rule over India. After India's independence, Indian troops started to march forward a little bit. After the liberation of Tibet in 1951, the Indian government dispatched its troops to approach the McMahon Line when our troops were marching towards Tibet. After the rebellion in Tibet, Indian troops strengthened their attempts to invade Tibet. The so-called border issue that took place recently primarily involves Longju [Langjiu], which is to the north of the yellow line on the Indian map. Indian patrollers even invaded Longju so that armed conflicts would occur on 25 August. Our troops have never marched so far. However, our troops have to patrol here to prevent any further rebellions after the Tibetan Rebellion took place. During the conflicts that took place later on, Indian troops fired at our sentinels, who had to fight back and killed three Indian soldiers (the Indian patrol consisted of more than ten soldiers) while the remaining soldiers fled. The Indian troops attacked our troops on an even larger scale the next day but they withdrew before we fought back. Some days later, we entered Longju. This is how the Longju incident that India claims came about. They have also invaded the Chinese territories of [illegible], [illegible], [illegible], and [illegible], and protected the armed rebel forces of Tibet in these regions. Meanwhile, Indian air fighters have also kept encroaching on our territorial airspaces.

Ambassador XXX [sic]: How are the conditions of the residents in these areas?

Zhang: The residents are all Chinese as these areas have been a part of China historically. Most of them are Tibetans. This is the situation at China's border with India.

Our Standing Committee of the National People's Congress will discuss this and Premier Zhou will make a report the day after tomorrow.

These documents are hereby distributed to all the ambassadors and charge d'affaires

present so that you can know about the situation. Have you any other questions?

Ambassador XXX [sic]: When [illegible] these documents?

Zhang: Maybe tomorrow or the day after tomorrow.