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# Negotiating the Return of Civilians: Chinese Perception, Tactics and Objectives at the First Fourteen Meetings of the Sino-American Ambassadorial Talks

By Yafeng Xia, February 2021





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# Negotiating the Return of Civilians: Chinese Perception, Tactics and Objectives at the First Fourteen Meetings of the Sino-American Ambassadorial Talks

Article and Translations by Yafeng Xia

In the immediate aftermath of the Korean War armistice, both Beijing and Washington seemed inclined to further ease tensions that had thus far alienated the United States and the People's Republic of China. On 7 July 1954, at an expanded meeting of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee (CC) Politburo, Mao Zedong, the CCP chairman, observed that the United States was quite isolated and faced difficulties both at home and abroad. He declared that “we are no longer able to shut our door against outsiders even if we want to. Now, things are moving in our favor. We must reach out [to the international arena].”<sup>1</sup>

Although China was still considered to be a “major threat” to US (United States) security interests in East and Southeast Asia, Washington was under pressure to prioritize Europe, its vital interest in the Cold War. Nonetheless, the Eisenhower administration felt compelled to deal with Communist China in a de facto diplomatic arrangement to settle unresolved disputes, including the retrieval of US citizens detained in China. Without formal diplomatic relations, the two countries agreed to

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*The author thanks Steven Levine and Nick Parlato for reading earlier versions of the manuscript.*

<sup>1</sup> Mao Zedong, “Unite and consolidate with any peace-loving country,” 7 July 1954, *Mao Zedong wenji* [A Collection of Mao Zedong's Papers] (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 1999), 6: 333.

maintain communications through a special mechanism: the Sino-American ambassadorial talks, which lasted from August 1955 to February 1970.<sup>2</sup>

China imprisoned approximately 40 US citizens for espionage and economic crimes during the last days of the Chinese Civil War and the subsequent conflict in Korea.<sup>3</sup> The US chose to restrict roughly 175 Chinese scientists and students, who were then studying in the United States, from leaving the country because they could possess knowledge that might damage American national security interests, especially after the outbreak of the Korean War.<sup>4</sup> At Geneva, on 19 May 1954, American officials asked Humphrey Trevelyan, the British chargé d'affaires in Beijing, to approach China's delegates at the conference and inquire about the release of those Americans held in China [\[Document #1\]](#).

Zhou Enlai, the Chinese Premier and foreign minister who was then heading the Chinese delegation at the Geneva Conference, immediately called a meeting to discuss how to exploit the opportunity. Although Sino-American relations were tense, he made it clear that Washington's interest in obtaining the release of imprisoned Americans could facilitate greater contact between their two countries. Accordingly, the Chinese delegation informed Trevelyan that they could work with the US delegation at Geneva to resolve Sino-American issues directly [\[Document #2\]](#). Huang Hua, the spokesman for the Chinese delegation, then took the initiative and mentioned the "unreasonable

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<sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive treatment of the Sino-American ambassadorial talks, see Yafeng Xia, *Negotiating with the Enemy: U.S.-China Talks during the Cold War, 1949-1972* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), chapters 4 & 5. The Chinese and U.S. chief negotiators, Wang Bingnan and Alexis Johnson respectively, published their memoirs on their roles during these talks, see Wang Bingnan, *ZhongMei huitan jiu nian huigu* [Nine Years of Sino-Soviet Talks -- A Retrospect] (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe, 1985, hereafter cited as *ZHJH*); U. Alexis Johnson with Jef Olivarius McAllister, *The Right Hand of Power* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1984); Kenneth Young, *Negotiating with the Chinese Communists: The United States Experience, 1953-1967* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1968). Colonel Robert B. Ekvall, the U.S. interpreter, also published memoirs on his role in negotiating with the Chinese, see Ekvall, *The Faithful Echo* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1960), especially 86-95. Archival records of these talks on the U.S. side could be found in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter cited as *FRUS*), 1955-57, vol. 2, China; and 1955-1957, China, vol. 3, Supplement.

<sup>3</sup> On 31 July 1955, the Chinese government set free eleven convicted US air force personnel. Thus, when the first session of the Ambassadorial Talks on 1 August 1955, according to the Chinese Foreign Ministry, the total number of US nationals in China is eighty-seven classified in four categories. See Document # 14.

<sup>4</sup> Johnson, *The Right Hand of Power*, 235. Alexis Johnson, the chief US negotiator, estimated the number of Chinese scientists and students was less than 175.

detention of Chinese residents and students” by the US government at a press conference on 27 May. Nevertheless, he declared that China was willing to hold direct talks with the United States on this issue, implying that China might consider releasing the detained Americans.<sup>5</sup>

The Chinese hoped this venture would lead to the establishment of a direct channel of contact with the United States and de facto recognition of the People’s Republic of China. To prepare for such a possibility, the Chinese delegation held a meeting to assess U.S. objectives and discuss problems that might arise during the talks. On 3 June, Zhou Enlai cabled Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, and the CCP CC, reporting that the Chinese delegation had already told the British that China and the United States could meet and use British officials as go-betweens.<sup>6</sup> “If the United States agreed to the talks,” Zhou stated, “we should meet them in accordance with our established policy and then decide where to hold talks in light of the meeting.” During the talks, the Chinese side should “first raise the question of the Chinese students who were prohibited from leaving the United States.” At the same time, China should also inform the US side that its management of the cases of Americans who had violated Chinese laws would differ from its approach to other Americans (residing) in China [\[Document #3\]](#).<sup>7</sup> The CCP CC approved both Zhou’s analysis and his suggested procedures for addressing the issue [\[Document #4\]](#).

Both sides seemed anxious to talk. U. Alexis Johnson, the American delegation coordinator, met with his PRC counterpart Wang Bingnan four times in June. Focused on the issue of the detained citizens, these talks achieved little except discussions of the status of each other’s nationals in the other’s country. On 21 June, when Wang suggested a joint communiqué asserting the right of the “‘law-abiding’ nationals and students” of their respective countries to leave and noted that Beijing would designate a “third party” to represent its interests in the United States, the American side broke off

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<sup>5</sup> ZHJH, 23-24.

<sup>6</sup> Liu Shaoqi was vice-chairman of the Central People’s government of China and China’s No. 2 leader.

<sup>7</sup> Li Ping, et al. *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949-1976* [A Chronology of Zhou Enlai] (hereafter cited as ZEN49), 1: 375.

the talks.<sup>8</sup> Even after these talks ended, the PRC and the US held numerous talks at the consular level through July 1955.<sup>9</sup> The Chinese “tried stringently to prevent the situation of using convicted Americans in China to exchange for the return of the Chinese students in the United States” [\[Document #5\]](#). Meanwhile, the UN General Assembly empowered Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold to seek the release of the Americans. In January 1955, Hammarskjold traveled to Beijing and held extensive talks with Zhou Enlai to no avail.<sup>10</sup>

In July 1954, the CCP CC decided that China must “liberate” Taiwan but did not call for immediate action. At a Politburo meeting on 5 August 1954, Mao proposed to launch a propaganda campaign for the liberation of Taiwan, the first such campaign in the history of the People’s Republic. The People’s Liberation Army (PLA) artillery bombardment of Jinmen (Quemoy) on 3 September inaugurated the beginning of the Taiwan Strait crisis of 1954-55.<sup>11</sup>

The shelling of Jinmen did not mean that Mao had given up hope for improving relations with the United States. Instead, China was practicing “tension” diplomacy: by increasing pressure on Taiwan, Mao hoped that Washington might reconsider its hostile policy toward the PRC. Mao had no intention of engaging directly in an armed conflict with the US over offshore islands at that time. After the successful capture of the island group of Dachen (in Zhejiang Province) in February 1955, he decided to halt the PLA attack on Jinmen.<sup>12</sup> Having demonstrated its determination to reunify the country, the

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<sup>8</sup> According to State Department minutes, “Johnson stated Wang raised issues beyond the scope of these discussions which he not prepared discuss... [and] indicated his belief that further discussions between himself and Wang no longer necessary ... [Johnson] suggested staff officers might be designated by each side for purpose passing on information.” *FRUS*, 1952-54, China and Japan, 14: 478.

<sup>9</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, Department of State, Washington, 6 July 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 2 China: 632. According to the Chinese Foreign Ministry Archives, from 29 July 1954 to 15 July 1955, the U.S. and the PRC held 16 consul-level talks in Geneva. These meetings were either between staff members of each Consulate-general or between Acting Chinese Consul-General Shen Ping and U.S. Consul-general Franklyn Gowen.

<sup>10</sup> Young, *Negotiating with the Chinese Communists*, 40-41; *ZEN49*, 1: 438-39.

<sup>11</sup> Pei Jianzhang, *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo waijiaoshi, 1949-1956* [A Diplomatic History of the People’s Republic of China] (Beijing: Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 1994), 336-38.

<sup>12</sup> Gordon H. Chang and He Di, “The Absence of War in the U.S.-China Confrontation over Quemoy and Matsu in 1954-1955: Contingency, Luck, Deterrence?” *American Historical Review* 98 (December 1993), 1514.



Chinese government adjusted its policy to reduce tensions. At the Bandung Conference in April 1955, the top CCP leadership instructed Zhou Enlai to declare that “the Chinese government is willing to sit down and talk with the United States regarding the relaxation of tensions in the Far East, and especially in the Taiwan area.”<sup>13</sup> Neutral Asian countries welcomed Zhou’s comment, and the US government also appeared to understand the message.

On 26 May, Zhou Enlai met with Trevelyan in Beijing. During their meeting, Zhou elaborated on China’s policy toward negotiations with the United States, claiming that they aimed to reduce and eliminate tension in the Taiwan Strait. As to the specific format of the negotiation, however, the Chinese leaders had not reached a final decision. On the one hand, China could support a ten-country conference such as the one proposed by the Soviet Union. On the other hand, China and the US could also conduct direct negotiations sponsored by other countries. Under no circumstances, however, would Beijing permit the Taiwan authorities to attend such an international conference. That is not to say that the Chinese government would refuse to conduct direct negotiations with the Taiwan authorities; on the contrary, it was willing to do so. Zhou stressed that there were two ways to solve the Taiwan problem, through peaceful means or war. If possible, China would try to liberate Taiwan peacefully. The Chinese leaders sought to conduct both international and domestic negotiations, either simultaneously or in some sort of sequence. Zhou also explained that “the two kinds of negotiations were related to each other but should not be lumped together”

[\[Document #6\]](#).

The US government seemed to realize that neither the consular level talks at Geneva nor UN mediation would resolve the issue of US prisoners in China. The State Department reluctantly agreed to hold talks with Beijing at the ambassadorial level in July. On 13 July, the British charge d’affaires Con O’Neill transmitted US government’s verbal message to Zhou Enlai, suggesting talks at the ambassadorial level [\[Document #7\]](#). In his capacity as a broker, O’Neill soon met with Zhou Enlai twice to agree on a

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<sup>13</sup> *Zhou Enlai wajijiao wenxuan* [Selected Diplomatic Papers of Zhou Enlai] (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 1990), 134.

date for the first meeting of Sino-American ambassadorial talks and finalize the text of a joint Sino-US news announcement [[Document #8](#) and [Document #9](#)]. Beijing believed that it had conveyed all the possible signals of its flexibility to the United States.

Beijing attached much greater importance to the forthcoming talks than Washington. Zhou Enlai not only gave detailed instructions for each meeting, but he made many corrections and additions to materials prepared by the Foreign Ministry as well. The top leadership, including Mao Zedong and Liu Shaoqi, remained informed about China's negotiation strategies and development as well. Under instructions from Zhou, the Foreign Ministry set up a "special supervisory group," headed by Zhang Hanfu, vice foreign minister, and Qiao Guanhua, assistant foreign minister to provide guidance to the Chinese negotiators. Zhang served as director of the group and Qiao was in charge of daily operations.<sup>14</sup> The Chinese Foreign Ministry archives additionally reveal that the Chinese had notified the Soviet Union of its plan and strategies for Sino-American ambassadorial talks two weeks before the first meeting on 1 August 1955. A copy of the Chinese negotiation plan was marked top secret and delivered to the Soviet embassy in Beijing on 18 July 1955 [[Document #10](#)]. Wang Bingnan, by then China's ambassador to Poland, was appointed chief negotiator. Wang had been a close assistant of Zhou Enlai since the late 1930s. He participated in the talks with General George Marshall in the 1940s and the Geneva Conferences on Korea and Indochina in 1954. Moreover, he directed the Foreign Ministry's General Office from October 1949 to early 1955 and played an important role in running the institution. Wang was selected over several other candidates for the job because, as he later recalled, he "had experience in maintaining contacts with different types of Americans" and "Premier Zhou knew me and trusted me very much."<sup>15</sup>

The PRC government made efforts to render the talks constructive. In its instructions to the Chinese negotiators, the Foreign Ministry indicated that China's policy at the ambassadorial meetings [at the outset] would be to take initiative to announce that "China had released eleven convicted American military personnel"

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<sup>14</sup> ZHJH, 32.

<sup>15</sup> ZHJH, 40-41.

before the beginning of the ambassadorial talks. The purpose was to liquidate a US pretext, pressure the Americans to solve some concrete issues, and lay a foundation for higher-level Sino-American talks. This would also create an isolated and passive situation for the United States on the issue of Taiwan. To achieve this aim, the Foreign Ministry instructed the Chinese negotiators to “take a conciliatory attitude ... respect each other and give attention to courtesy.” The document shows that Beijing anticipated that the higher-level meetings would be forthcoming by entering into talks with the United States at Geneva. It planned to propose holding the higher-level talks at the foreign ministers’ level in November of that year. The goal would be “to relax and eliminate the Sino-American tension in the Taiwan Strait area.” The PRC would prefer to hold the foreign ministers’ meeting in New Delhi, but it would concede to Geneva if necessary [[Document #11](#) and [Document #14](#)].

The first session of the Sino-American ambassadorial talks began at 4:00 pm on 1 August 1955 at the President’s Room of the Palais des Nations in Geneva. In order to create a positive atmosphere for the talks, Ambassador Wang first announced that Beijing had released 11 convicted US military personnel on 31 July before their sentences expired.<sup>16</sup> The US representative, Ambassador Alexis Johnson, welcomed this gesture. The two sides soon reached an agreement on the discussion of two agenda items: the return of civilians of both sides to their respective countries, and other practical matters at issue between the two sides, such as the establishment of diplomatic relations, the withdrawal of US forces from Taiwan, development of trade and cultural relations, and PRC membership at the UN.<sup>17</sup>

This proved to be a good start, but it did not last long. Wang Bingnan later explained that significant differences in agenda setting and policy objectives existed from the very beginning. The Chinese held that the talks had to focus on some substantial problems such as the Taiwan issue, arrangements for direct talks between US Secretary of State John F. Dulles and Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, and the

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<sup>16</sup> ZHJJ, 48-49. These eleven pilots were freed and left China on 31 July 1955.

<sup>17</sup> ZHJJ, 48-49, and “A Résumé of the Warsaw Talks, 1955-1970,” box 2187, Pol Chicom U. S. 1970-73, RG 59, National Archives II, p. 2.

establishment of cultural ties between the two countries. In the words of Robert Ekvall, the US interpreter, the Chinese “wish to gain the maximum advantage from an accumulation of quasi-diplomatic contacts and exchanges ... and finally arriving at a meeting at the foreign ministers level which, inferentially, could only result in *de jure* as well as *de facto* recognition.”<sup>18</sup>

The United States, on the other hand, insisted on repatriating Americans detained in China and demanded that China not resort to force over Taiwan. As Ekvall observed that the Americans “wished to...move forward as slowly as possible – always talking, however, rather than risking war – in negotiation and agreement on whatever else might be comprehended within the term ‘other practical matters as issue’.”<sup>19</sup> In the hope of facilitating an amicable and productive session, the Chinese agreed to discuss the question of the return of the civilians first and then move to other substantial matters.<sup>20</sup> It took another 13 meetings before the two sides could reach an agreement on the repatriation of civilians on 10 September 1955.

Many of the documents translated here are cable communications between the Foreign Ministry in Beijing and the Chinese negotiators in Geneva, in particular, the Foreign Ministry’s instructions to the Chinese negotiators during the first 14 talks. These sources add texture to our understanding of the Chinese perception of, tactics and objectives in dealing with the United States.

From Beijing’s perspective, China could not agree to an immediate release or to set a date for the release of the prisoners in response to the U.S. demand, as this was regarded as an issue of national sovereignty and dignity.<sup>21</sup> The PRC also insisted on equal treatment for Chinese aliens in the United States and the right, as their international protector, “to entrust [a] third country of [the PRC’s] own choice [to] take

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<sup>18</sup> Ekvall, *The Faithful Echo*, 88.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>20</sup> *ZHJH*, 47.

<sup>21</sup> Wang Bingnan insisted, “American nationals [would be] treated like all other aliens in China and accorded protection as long as they respect Chinese law. If they breach Chinese law [they would be] treated as the law provides.” Johnson to Secretary of State, 2 August 1955; and Johnson to Secretary of State, 18 August 1955, in *FRUS, 1955-57, 3: Supplement*. See also *FRUS, 1955-57, 3: 40*.

charge of affairs of nationals [of] each country.”<sup>22</sup> This seemed to be the PRC strategy: “play up issue of Chinese nationals in the US” in order “to steer the talks away from Johnson’s objective, the American prisoners.”<sup>23</sup> As Kenneth Young suggested, “Peking’s [Beijing’s] opening negotiating tactic was an aggressive move to put Washington on the defensive and shift the emphasis away from the Americans’ real target in China: the prisoners.”<sup>24</sup>

Chinese Foreign Ministry documents demonstrate how the PRC utilized this tactic at the first 14 talks. For example, on 3 August, the Foreign Ministry instructed, “At present, our target of struggle is to win U.S. concessions on the return of our nationals and students. The focus of this issue is to have India taking care of the affairs of our nationals and students” [\[Document #16\]](#). These documents also show that the PRC’s overarching objective at the talks was to gain US diplomatic recognition. For instance, on 10 August, the Foreign Ministry stated, “If the US walks one step further, agreeing to provide a complete list of Chinese nationals in the United States and agrees that India looks after Chinese nationals in the United States, it is equal to the recognition of the PRC” [\[Document #19\]](#). On 18 August, in his report on the Sino-American ambassadorial talks to the CCP Central Committee, Zhou Enlai reiterated this view, “The proposed US amendment is basically in our favor. It, in fact, admits our legal jurisdiction over Chinese nationals in the US. Its publication would deal a severe blow to Jiang Jieshi’s bandit clique” [\[Document #23\]](#). The PRC leaders also feared they would lose a valuable bargaining chip if they released all US prisoners because the Americans might end the talks at the ambassadorial level. On various occasions, Wang Bingnan was instructed to inform the US negotiators that, “The cases of US nationals have been reviewed on a case by case basis ... but it depends on the conduct of each convict and the improvement in Sino-American relations” for their earlier release [\[Document #28\]](#).

What can we learn from the study of these Chinese diplomatic documents?

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<sup>22</sup> Johnson to Secretary of State, 2 August 1955, *FRUS, 1955-57, 3: Supplement*.

<sup>23</sup> “A Résumé of the Warsaw Talks,” box 2187, RG 59, p. 6.

<sup>24</sup> Young, *Negotiating with the Chinese Communists*, 67.

First, they reveal the inner workings of the Chinese foreign policymaking establishment in its formative years. Much of the current scholarship emphasizes a Mao-Zhou system in the PRC's foreign policymaking. According to this line of interpretation, when the PRC was founded in 1949, Mao Zedong, as head of state, retained the power of setting foreign policy orientation and guidelines for the new regime. He consigned Zhou Enlai to the role of a manager to overlook the day-to-day operation of foreign affairs. The five-man CCP Secretariat, and later the Standing Committee of the Politburo, would then accord legitimacy to Mao's major policy decisions. The Politburo meetings would also help him weigh the pros and cons of a major foreign policy decision. Moreover, these meetings enabled Mao to overcome opposition and build consensus.<sup>25</sup>

These Chinese Foreign Ministry documents suggest that Zhou Enlai's soft approach to international issues seems to have prevailed between 1954 and 1958. Mao, who believed in the international class struggle in conducting China's diplomacy, seemed to have acquiesced to Zhou's appeal for participating in the Geneva Conference, the Bandung Conference and starting talks with the United States. Within the Foreign Ministry, Zhou dominated the decision-making and policy-implementing process. His chief associates, deputy foreign minister Zhang Wentian, vice foreign minister Zhang Hanfu and assistant foreign minister Qiao Guanhua followed his orders and carried out his decisions [\[Document #10\]](#). But by 1958, Mao became impatient with the Sino-American ambassadorial talks due to the lack of progress. In early 1958, Mao told Marshal Chen Yi (soon to be Zhou Enlai's replacement as foreign minister) that he had instructed Chinese diplomats to make contacts with the Americans during the Geneva Conference. Mao said that this was not consistent with his usual line of thinking, and China should reverse to struggle with the Americans with no attempt to develop relations with the US government.<sup>26</sup> It was in 1958 that Zhou Enlai lost his post as

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<sup>25</sup> Lu Ning, *The Dynamics of Foreign-policy Decisionmaking in China*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boulder, Colo: Westview, 2000), 161-62.

<sup>26</sup> See Xia, *Negotiating with the Enemy*, 97.

foreign minister and China's diplomatic posture became more militant and confrontational.

Second, Zhou frequently told the Chinese diplomats that, "as there is no small issue in diplomacy, a diplomat should have only limited authorization. The final decision-making power is vested in the Party Center."<sup>27</sup> Chinese diplomats were forbidden from making decisions regarding a diplomatic issue before receiving authorization from their superiors. The purpose of these rules was to form a centralized foreign service, which would stick closely to the Party line. We learn from these documents that the Sino-American ambassadorial talks were conducted under the strict guidance and control of the home office: "the special supervisory group" on the Chinese side. The Chinese chief negotiator Wang Bingnan was ordered to report all his speeches for prior authorization and to send minutes of the meetings to the home office for its review. Nonetheless, Wang Bingnan was not over-cautious, acting in a way much closer to a negotiator than a messenger. This might have been due to his senior standing within the Foreign Ministry and his close relationship with Zhou Enlai. Alexis Johnson regarded Wang as a professional diplomat. Early on in the negotiations, Johnson noted that "he [Wang] is acting much more in tradition of old time Chinese bargainer than communist diplomat."<sup>28</sup> But the Foreign Ministry was not hesitant to reproach Wang when they believed that Wang had made spontaneous remarks or was not effective in representing China's position [[Document #15](#), [Document #17](#), and [Document #35](#)].

Third, when Mao issued his "leaning to one side" statement in his article "On People's Democratic Dictatorship" on 30 June 1949, he announced that new China would support the Soviet Union in international affairs.<sup>29</sup> These documents reveal that the PRC developed its policy toward the United States for this period through close coordination with the Soviet Union. The Chinese Foreign Ministry kept the Soviet

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<sup>27</sup> Yang Qinghua, "Recollections of Premier Zhou's Achievement on Building New China's Diplomatic Contingent," in Tian Zengpei and Wang Taiping, eds., *Lao waijiaoguan huiyi Zhou Enlai* [Senior Diplomats' Remembrance of Zhou Enlai] (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe, 1998), 423-30; Pei Monong, *Zhou Enlai waijiaoxue* [A Study of Zhou Enlai's Diplomacy] (Beijing: Zhongyang Dangxiao Chubanshe, 1997), 93-102.

<sup>28</sup> Johnson to Secretary of State, 12 August 1955, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 3, *Supplement*.

<sup>29</sup> Pei, chief ed., *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo waijiaoshi, 1949-1956*, 3.

Embassy in Beijing informed of its upcoming talks with the United States and shared top-secret negotiation strategies with them well before the beginning of the talks [\[Document #10\]](#). These sources prove that the Sino-Soviet relationship was indeed in its honeymoon period in 1955.

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## Document Appendix

### Document No. 1

#### Minutes of the Talk between Huan Xiang and Humphrey Trevelyan on the Return of Chinese and US Nationals to Their Respective Countries (Excerpt), 19 May 1954

[Source: PRC FMA, Folder No. 206-Y0012, reprinted in *Waijiaobu dang'anguan ed., Yijiuwusi nian Rineiwa huiyi (The Geneva Conference of 1954) (Beijing: Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 2006), 379. Translated by Yafeng Xia.*

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114705.>]

[...]

**[Humphrey] Trevelyan:**<sup>30</sup> I discussed the aforementioned issues in the capacity of the British representative to Beijing. Now I'd like to raise an issue as a private person. As you know, there are many US nationals in China who could not return to the US, and many Chinese nationals in the US who could not return to China. In the interest of both China and the United States, I'd like to serve as a mediator for the resolution of the issue. I solemnly declare that I raise this issue only as a private individual. If China wants me to serve as a mediator, I'll be willing to make efforts. If not, it's all right with me.

**Huan Xiang:**<sup>31</sup> Regarding this issue, China has not detained US nationals and has not prevented them from returning to the United States. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, US nationals willing to depart have already left China if there is no particular hindrance (such as debt disputes, criminal activities, illegal border crossing, etc.). Thousands have left every year. On the contrary, the US has detained many Chinese students, denying their return to their country. The Chinese people are indignant over this. Now Mr. Trevelyan says he would like to serve as a mediator. Since I'm not the official responsible for the matter, I can't respond to your request now. I'll reply after consulting with the relevant units and asking for instructions.

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### Document No. 2

#### Minutes of the Talk between Huan Xiang and Trevelyan on the Return of Chinese and US Nationals to their Respective Countries (Excerpt)," 27 May 1954

[Source: PRC FMA, Folder No. 206-Y0012, reprinted in *Waijiaobu Dang'anguan ed., Yijiuwusi nian Rineiwa huiyi (The Geneva Conference of 1954) (Beijing: Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 2006), 381-82. Translated by Yafeng Xia.*

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114706.>]

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<sup>30</sup> Humphrey Trevelyan was a British negotiation representative to the PRC from 1953 to 8 July 1954, and charge d'affaires from 8 July 1954 to June 1955.

<sup>31</sup> Huan Xiang was a member of the Chinese delegation to the Geneva Conference. He was the director-general of the Foreign Ministry's Department of European and African Affairs.

[...]

**Huan Xiang:** Last time, Mr. Trevelyan indicated that he was willing to mediate as a private individual in settling the issues of US nationals in China and Chinese nationals in the US. We appreciate your good intentions. This issue, as I said in our previous meeting, consists of two fundamentally different aspects:

1. The Chinese government neither detains nor denies exit permits of US nationals. The number of US nationals in China has dropped from about 1500-1600 in 1949 to 80-90 at present. In the last four years, 95 percent of US nationals have left China. This demonstrates that the Chinese government does not prevent US nationals from leaving China. It is true that a tiny number—about 30 Americans—are imprisoned. These detained Americans constitute two categories: 1) US nationals who committed crimes in China; 2) Spies who sneaked into China from either sea or air, engaging in espionage. We must treat these people as our law stipulates. All sovereign nations would do the same.

2. The US government denies the right of Chinese nationals, especially students, to return to their home country. About 5000 to 6000 Chinese students have been prevented from returning to China, although they have not broken any US laws. In the last several years, the Associated Press, the United Press and many other foreign presses and newspapers, have covered the stories of Chinese students detained in the US. Mr. Trevelyan might have read some of them. The Chinese people are very indignant about this utterly unjustifiable act of the US government.

Although these are two fundamentally different issues, if the US is willing to talk, we do not reject negotiations. Since the Chinese delegation and the US delegation are all here [in Geneva], the US delegation could contact our delegation directly, or through Mr. Trevelyan, if they want to.

**[Humphrey] Trevelyan:** I completely agree that the United States and China ought to talk to each other directly. I may not be present. But if necessary, I stay ready to serve as a broker. At present, I don't know the US attitude toward this issue. I may make an appointment with you within a matter of days.

[...]

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### **Document No. 3**

**Telegram from Zhou Enlai to Mao Zedong and Liu Shaoqi, on the Issue of the US Asking China to Release Convicted US Nationals in China, 3 June 1954**

[Source: PRC FMA, Folder No. 206-Y0050, reprinted in *Waijiaobu Dang'anguan ed., Yijiuwusi nian Rineiwa huiyi (The Geneva Conference of 1954) (Beijing: Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 2006), 383. Translated by Yafeng Xia.*  
[https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114711.](https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114711)]

[To] The Chairman [Mao Zedong], Comrade [Liu] Shaoqi, and the Central Committee:

Regarding the US request that our side releases the convicted and imprisoned US nationals in China, the US has been probing our attitude through news media. On 19 May, the US asked the UK to take up the matter with us. On 22 May, [Head of the Geneva Conference Delegation Walter B.] Smith touched on the issue in his conversation with [Soviet Foreign Minister and Head of the Soviet Delegation Vyacheslav] Molotov, admitting that some aspects of US policy toward China are impractical.<sup>32</sup> The US press and newspapers reported on this from 20 May to 24 May. On 26 May, the spokesman of our delegation refuted the US allegations at a news conference, raising the issue of US detention of Chinese students, and orally expressing the view that the US and China should come into direct contact over this issue. On 27 May, we replied to the UK that China and the US could come into direct contact via the introduction of the UK. Since then, the US side has informed the U.K. that it agrees to direct talks, but there has been no further development. According to the Associated Press, this was because the US government was against its delegation's having direct contact with us. According to Trevelyan, the British negotiation representative, "the US delegation to the Geneva Conference is still interested in direct talks with China via the UK's introduction, but the delegation is waiting for instructions from the State Department." It thus could be inferred that the US delegation disagrees with the State Department on this issue. We plan to wait for a short while. If the US comes to talk [with us], we will contact them as initially planned and decide where to hold negotiations accordingly. During the negotiations, we would first mention the detention of Chinese students in the US and distinguish the convicted US nationals from other Americans [in China]. If the US is indeed unwilling to come into contact with us, we would issue a statement, elaborating our consistent policy of punishing US nationals with criminal offenses and protecting the law-abiding US nationals. Meanwhile, we would expose and refute the unjustifiable US action of detaining our students. Hereby is the report and please give instructions.

Zhou Enlai  
3 June 1954

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<sup>32</sup> Walter B. Smith was undersecretary of state of the United States in 1954. He was then acting head of the U.S. delegation at the Geneva Conference. Vyacheslav Molotov was a Soviet politician and diplomat, a leading figure in the Soviet government from the 1920s to 1957. He was Soviet foreign minister in 1954 and the head of the Soviet delegation.

#### **Document No. 4**

##### **Cable from the CCP Central Committee, reply to Zhou Enlai's Cable of 3 June 1954, 6 June 1954**

*[Source: PRC FMA, Folder No. 206-Y050, reprinted in Waijiaobu Dang'anguan ed., Yijiuwusi nian Rineiwa huiyi (The Geneva Conference of 1954) (Beijing: Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 2006), 384. Translated by Yafeng Xia.*

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114712.>]

[To] Comrade [Zhou] Enlai:

Your telegram dated 3 June has been received.

The Central Committee agrees with your analysis on the issue of US nationals [in China] and the proposal for handling this issue. Prior to issuing a statement, please notify the home office so as to coordinate the propaganda work.

Central Committee  
6 June 1954

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#### **Document No. 5.1**

##### **Cable from Feng Xuan to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Please Instruct Us regarding Policy toward Talks with the United States," 4 April 1955**

*[Source: PRC FMA 111-00064-05. Obtained and translated by Yafeng Xia.*

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114713.>]

To the Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

The US Consulate General at Geneva called our Consulate General to schedule a meeting for 4:00 p.m. tomorrow.

According to Agence France-Presse, the US Department of State has already granted exit permits to 76 Chinese students. It is likely that the US side will discuss the Chinese students' issue, which we raised at previous meetings, and will also inquire into the convicted Americans in China. Please give us instructions and provide us with relevant materials, such as the names of those students who have already returned to China, facts regarding US obstruction [toward the resolution of this issue] and abuse of the Chinese students, and information regarding the convicted Americans [in China]. We wish to postpone the meeting until the afternoon of the 6th [of April]. Please send instructions immediately so that we prepare (your reply to our last request was too late).

Feng Xuan<sup>33</sup>  
4 April [1955]

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## Document No. 5.2

### Cable from the Chinese Foreign Ministry to Feng Xuan, "Sino-American Contact regarding Students and Nationals," 5 April 1955

[Source: PRC FMA 111-00064-05. Obtained and translated by Yafeng Xia.

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/120382.>]

Secret

[To] Minister Feng [Xuan],

First, [we believe] that the US side will notify [us] of the approval of the exit of 76 students and ask about the possibility of releasing the US criminals [in China]. We will first listen to the formal reply from the US side regarding the students and then raise relevant questions. [We should] only answer questions regarding condemned Americans categorically and try stringently to prevent the situation of using condemned Americans in China to exchange for the return of the Chinese students in the United States.

[...]

Foreign Ministry  
5 April 1955

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## Document No. 6

### Minutes of Conversation between Premier Zhou Enlai and British Charge d'Affaires Humphrey Trevelyan, 26 May 1955

[Source: PRC FMA 207-00010-16, 61-69. Translated by Yafeng Xia.

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110837.> ]

Time: 26 May 1955, 5:00 p.m to 5:55 p.m.

Location: Xihuating, Zhongnanhai

Chinese in Attendance: Director-General Huang Hua; Pu Shouchang (interpreter and recorder)

British in Attendance: [Edward] Joude

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<sup>33</sup> Feng Xuan was Chinese Minister to Switzerland.

Premier Zhou says there are several matters to be discussed.

First, in our last meeting, Mr. [Humphrey] Trevelyan mentioned that the British Foreign Secretary [Harold McMillan] hopes that the Chinese government could clarify its position on Taiwan. We have prepared a document, the content of which is part of my report on the Afro-Asian Conference on the Taiwan issue to the Standing Committee of National People's Congress. This is a formal announcement of our position. Although it was published in the newspaper, we, nonetheless, have printed out a clean copy for you (Premier Zhou handed over the document in both Chinese and English. See attachment). In addition, we have some oral opinions, which we hope Mr. Trevelyan will transmit to the British Foreign Secretary.

The document I handed over to you today represents the Chinese stance. At the meeting of the delegation heads of eight countries, we elaborated our position based on this stand. There are several important points regarding our stand. I will talk about them with [Krishna] Menon [Indian Ambassador to the UN].<sup>34</sup> But I would like to address them now:

1. In order to facilitate talks between China and the US, both sides should work directly or indirectly in order to relax tensions in the Taiwan area. This is not a give-and-take condition, but rather will demonstrate the sincerity of both sides. On the Chinese side, after our Bandung declaration, we made several other statements. Soon, we would like to take additional steps to show that China is willing to relax tensions. We believe that the US, with Britain's influence, should take concrete steps to relax tensions. In this way, it would create favorable conditions for China and the US to sit down and talk.
2. In order to relax tensions and create favorable conditions for the realization of Sino-American talks, we have consulted with Mr. Menon that we agree to prior diplomatic contacts with the US, such as what we have already been doing. China and the US may come in contact through other countries, such as the Soviet, Indian and British introduction. Or the Chinese and US envoys may also come in contact in Moscow, London and Delhi through the introduction of these governments. We have already indicated this stipulation to the Indian and British governments. Now, we would like Mr. Trevelyan to convey this to the British government. We would like to hear Britain's opinions.
3. The topic of Sino-American negotiations is to relax and eliminate tension in the Taiwan area. We have not yet made a decision on the final format of the negotiations. We agree to and support the Soviet proposal of a ten-country conference. It is also alright to hold a conference with more or less than ten countries. China and the United

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<sup>34</sup> Krishna Menon was the Indian ambassador to the UN from 1952 to 1962. In 1955, he made an effort to set up contact between the U.S. and the PRC.

States may also talk to each other directly with the help of other countries. We will not decide what format to adopt at present. It depends on further developments.

4. No matter under what circumstance and time [of the Sino-American negotiations], Jiang Jieshi is not allowed to participate in these international conferences. The Chinese government does not reject, but on the contrary, welcomes direct contact with Jiang Jieshi. In the document I handed to you today, [we mention] that there are two ways to liberate Taiwan—through peaceful means or war. We strive to liberate Taiwan through peaceful means if conditions permit. That is, to negotiate with Jiang Jieshi. Thus, there are two kinds of negotiations: one is an international negotiation between China and the US; the other is domestic political negotiation between China and Jiang Jieshi. We strive for these two kinds of negotiations, which could be simultaneous or in any sort of sequence. Although they are related to each other, we should not lump them together.

The aforementioned four points are what needs to be explained based on the Chinese government's position. Since the British government wants us to clarify [these points], we hope that Mr. Trevelyan will transmit them [to the British government]. These are not intended for public announcement. The document on the Chinese government position I handed (to you today) is public. It is for the review of the British government. But the aforementioned four points are not for publication. They might be conducive to the British effort to promote and relax tension.

Trevelyan says that Premier Zhou's oral message will be warmly welcomed by the British government. The British Foreign Secretary will be delighted to receive these clarifications. He says he wants to ask some minor questions in order to find out if he completely understands Premier Zhou's four points. He says, according to his understanding, Premier Zhou suggests that both sides take steps to relax tensions, but this is not a precondition for negotiations. He says that he believes Premier Zhou does not want to elaborate on what steps the US should take at present.

Premier Zhou says we want to see responses from the US. We had discussed this issue with Mr. Menon. Since Mr. Menon is going to Washington via London, he will talk with the new British government. The British people are electing a new government. The Chinese people have always respected the British people's right to choose their own government.

Trevelyan says he understands Premier Zhou's second point, that is, through the mediation of the Soviet, British and Indian governments, Chinese and US Ambassadors will hold bilateral talks in Moscow in order to discuss preparatory work for the Sino-American negotiations.

Premier Zhou says it is not only in Moscow, but also in London and Delhi.

Trevelyan asks if the contacts at three locations should be simultaneous or come under one control. He says this is only a technical issue. The reason why he asks is that he wants to avoid overlapping.

Premier Zhou says this question needs explanation. The first step of diplomatic contact [between the US and China] is via the mediation of the Soviet Union, India and the UK. For example, in the case of India, Mr. Menon is coming to Beijing, but he will also visit Washington. This is mediation. In the case of the UK, the British government wants to know the Chinese attitude, and will notify the US of the Chinese attitude. Meanwhile, the UK will also notify us of the US attitude. In the case of the Soviet Union, Dulles talked about the Taiwan issue with Soviet Foreign Minister [Vyacheslav] Molotov. As to the contact between the Chinese and US envoys through the introduction of the three countries, that is auxiliary. Without the first kind of contact, the second kind of contact is useless, even impossible.

Trevelyan says, as for China, it makes no difference whether the contacts between the Chinese and US envoys are at one location, two locations, or three locations. He says, as to the third point proposed by Premier Zhou, the scope of Sino-American negotiations, Premier Zhou only talked about the relaxation of tensions in the Taiwan area. It is not suitable to discuss the details now. It is a topic of discussion or elaboration for future contacts when necessary.

Premier Zhou says the topics for discussion, in general, should include issues raised by both sides. Thus, the formulation of “relaxing and eliminating tensions in the Taiwan area” is appropriate. Otherwise, it is not easy to find a suitable expression.

Trevelyan says the fourth question is about an opportune moment for negotiations. He says he knows very well that the first kind of negotiation is international in nature, while the second kind is domestic in nature. He asks whether Premier Zhou believes that the opportune moment for these two kinds of negotiation could be discussed at the preliminary negotiation stage, which is during the diplomatic contacts mentioned in his second point.

Premier Zhou replies that diplomatic contact is primarily for international negotiation. As for domestic negotiations, this is China’s internal affairs. It may be conducted anytime. As for how to peacefully resolve the Taiwan issue, it may be discussed in the diplomatic contacts. We do not reject the discussion of this issue.

Trevelyan says he still has a question about the use of the phrase. He asks, does “diplomatic contact” refer to direct negotiations for the purpose of considering concrete issues? Is it similar to China’s contacts with other countries in Geneva? The reason he asks the question is that he wants to understand the issue correctly so as to lead it to a promising path.



Premier Zhou says diplomatic contacts are not negotiations, nor are they open negotiations. Diplomatic contacts are contacts via diplomatic channels. It is not open. Premier Zhou asks, does Trevelyan envisage the issue of diplomatic recognition, which the US side has raised?

Trevelyan says that is right. He says this might be the reason why the US government opposes diplomatic contacts. The purpose of the question is to tell London confidently that the Chinese does not intend such an implication.

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## **Document No. 7**

### **Minutes of Conversation between Premier Zhou Enlai and British Charge d'Affaires Con O'Neill, 13 July 1955**

*[Source: PRC FMA 207-00011-11, 85-92. Translated by Yafeng Xia.*

*<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110838> ]*

Time: 13 July 1955

Location: The Foreign Ministry

Chinese in Attendance: Director-General Huang Hua; Deputy Director-General Wang Zhuoru; Pu Shouchang (interpreter and recorder)

British in Attendance: Counselor [John] Addis; [Edward] Joude

[British Chargé d'affaires to the PRC Con] O'Neill presents Premier Zhou with a copy of the British announcement signed by [British Prime Minister Anthony] Eden and a personal note from Foreign Secretary Harold Macmillan.<sup>35</sup> Macmillan hopes to meet with Premier Zhou in the future and establish relations similar to what Eden has had with him.

Premier Zhou says that he is willing to establish close relations with Foreign Secretary Macmillan and expects to establish such a relationship through the British and Chinese Chargé d'affaires.

O'Neill says that he received instructions from Foreign Secretary Macmillan this morning, asking him to transmit the US government's verbal message to Premier Zhou. He says that he was instructed to transmit this message orally, but he is willing to leave a hand-written note for Premier Zhou as well. The US government note is as follows:

"Your and our consul-level representatives have been meeting in Geneva to negotiate the repatriation of civilians to their respective countries over the past year. We are disappointed with the results. It has been suggested that it would aid in the

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<sup>35</sup> Con O'Neill was British Charge d'Affaires to the PRC from 13 July 1955 to 26 June 1957. Anthony Eden was British Prime Minister from 7 April 1955 to 10 January 1957.

resolution of the issue if it is dealt with at a higher level. This will also contribute to the settlement of other practical matters at issue between our two sides. If you are in favor of this, we will appoint an ambassadorial-level representative to meet with your representative of identical rank at an agreed time in Geneva.”

O’Neill says he was instructed to raise three additional points:

1. The US government is not going to disclose this proposal before receiving your response. It will only disclose it at a time agreed upon by both sides after receiving your reply.
2. The US government assumes that the proposed talks do not suggest diplomatic recognition. This is similar to the Sino-American contacts at Geneva.
3. The British government believes that the proposal is very useful. The British government hopes that the Chinese government will accept this proposal.

The Premier says that [the Chinese government] is not replying to the US government’s proposal right now. But [he] wants to raise several points:

1. At the Geneva Conference, the Chinese and US representatives agreed that consuls of both sides notify the other side of information regarding their nationals. Thus, the contacts between the two sides go beyond this limit. In this regard, the Chinese side informed the US side of many things about the US nationals [in China]. But the information the US side gave us regarding Chinese students is inaccurate. It is not clear whether some of the things have been taken care of or not. Should there be any dissatisfaction, we have more reason to feel it [than the US].
2. For these reasons, we once told Menon of India that we wanted to propose to the US through him. To resolve the issue of nationals in each other’s respective countries and because there is no diplomatic relationship between China and the US, our two governments could entrust a third party to represent one another on the issue of nationals. The US government once raised the issue, through the Office of the British Chargé d’affaires, that the Office of the British Chargé d’affaires represents the affairs of the US nationals. That was several years ago. Given the situation at that time, we did not respond. At the Geneva Conference, we suggested a similar proposal. But the US did not respond. Thus we again proposed [this] to Menon. For example, the US may entrust Britain to represent US nationals [in China] while India could represent Chinese nationals [in the US]. Thus, it will be able to move from information exchanges to actual settlement. I assume that Menon has already talked about this with the British government. We think this is the best and most practical way. Incidentally, this is what the US first proposed. We modified it for both sides. This is more conducive to the settlement of practical issues than the negotiations between the two sides proposed by the US.

3. As to the current US proposal, of course, we will not make it public before responding.

O'Neill says that he will report what the Premier has just discussed to Foreign Secretary McMillan. He is grateful to the Premier for putting forward these informal ideas. He acknowledges that the Premier has reservations about proposing a formal reply. He says, of course, he is not in the position to comment and interpret the US government letter. But he wants to point out, and he is confident that the Premier must have noticed, that the letter says that this proposal "will aid in further discussion and settlement of other practical matters at issue between the two sides." He wants to reiterate the British government's position that this proposal is extremely useful, and hopes that the Chinese government will accept. He says he hopes the Premier would call him in and tell him the decision after further study and consultation.

The Premier agreed to notify the Office of the British Chargé d'affaires of the Chinese decision for transmitting to the US government.

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### **Document No. 8.1**

#### **Minutes of Conversation between Premier Zhou Enlai and British Charge d'Affaires Con O'Neill, 15 July 1955**

[Source: PRC FMA 110-00141-04, 26-27. Translated by Yafeng Xia.

[https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110839.](https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110839)]

Time: 15 July 1955, 3:00-3:15 p.m.

Location: Xihuating, Zhongnanhai

Chinese in Attendance: Director-General Huang Hua; Pu Shouchang (interpreter and recorder)

British in Attendance: Joude

Premier Zhou first handed over the Chinese government's response to the US proposal to [O'Neill] for the British government to transmit to the US government (Attachment I).

After reading the response, O'Neill says he will immediately transmit it to the UK government, who will undoubtedly transmit it to the US government in a timely fashion. He told Premier Zhou that the UK government believes that the US proposal is very useful. Thus, he believes that the UK government will be pleased to receive this document.

Premier Zhou raises the following points:

1. Since the UK government believes this is a very useful proposal, we have taken their opinion into consideration. Thus, we have taken swift action to approve this proposal.
2. We agree not to announce this until after an agreement is reached.
3. We have an oral proposal, which we want the UK government to transmit to the US government. If the US agrees to the date we suggest for the first meeting, we propose that both sides simultaneously release a piece of news. Then, Premier Zhou reads out our draft joint communiqué (Attachment II). Premier Zhou says that this proposal, for sure, should be raised only after the US agrees to the date we have proposed. Premier Zhou then says Mr. Chargé d'affaires must have noticed that, in this piece of news, we have used all of the formulations from the US document.

O'Neill asks, does Premier Zhou suggest that Beijing and the US will release this joint communiqué simultaneously at the same location after the US agrees to the date and approves the communiqué?

Premier Zhou says yes. If the US accepts our date, then this joint communiqué should be released before 21 July. The time in the US is several hours later than that in China. We could agree to a time chosen by the US. Both sides may also agree to use Greenwich Time, i.e. British time.

O'Neill says that he will definitely transmit Premier Zhou's suggestion to the UK government.

Premier Zhou says that he hopes that Mr. Chargé d'affaires will be successful in handling his first business upon assuming office.

O'Neill thanks Premier Zhou for his good wishes. He feels fortunate to have such a good start.

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## **Document No. 8.2**

### **The Response of the People's Republic of China's Government to the United States Government, Transmitted through the British Government, 14 July 1955**

*[Source: PRC FMA 110-00141-04, 28. Translated by Yafeng Xia.*

*[https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/120383.](https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/120383)]*

## **Attachment I**

The Response of the People's Republic of China's Government to the United States Government, Transmitted through the British Government

According to the Chinese and American agreement at Geneva last year, our respective consular-level representatives held talks [with one another]. In the past year, we have notified you of the situation of US nationals in China in detail and in a timely fashion. But we have not been rightly and appropriately notified of the situation of Chinese nationals, especially regarding the students, in the United States. Because of this, we are extremely unsatisfied with the result of the talks held at Geneva this past year.

We believe that the suggestion stated in your letter is useful. That is, China and the US should talk at a higher level in order to aid the return of [Chinese and American] nationals to their respective countries. This will also contribute to the discussion and settlement of other practical matters at issue between our two sides. We will appoint an ambassadorial level representative to meet with your representative of identical rank in Geneva. We propose 21 July as the date for the first meeting. We are willing to have your opinion [on this matter].

14 July 1955

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### **Document No. 8.3**

#### **Joint Communiqué (Draft), Proposed by Premier Zhou to British Charge d’Affaires Con O’Neill, 17 July 1955**

*[Source: PRC FMA 110-00141-04, 29. Translated by Yafeng Xia.  
[https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/120384.](https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/120384)]*

#### **Attachment II**

Draft Joint Communiqué

(Proposed by Premier Zhou to British Chargé d’affaires Con O’Neill on 17 July 1955)

After consultations, it has been agreed that China and the United States raise the consular level talks held during the last year at Geneva to the ambassadorial level in order to aid in settling the matter of repatriation of civilians who desire to return to their respective countries and to facilitate further discussions and settlement of certain other practical matters now at issue between the two sides. The first meeting of the ambassadorial representatives from the two sides will take place on 21 July 1955 at Geneva.

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## **Document No. 9**

### **Minutes of Conversation between Premier Zhou Enlai and British Charge d’Affaires Con O’Neill, 18 July 1955**

*[Source: PRC FMA 110-00141-07, 35-39. Translated by Yafeng Xia.*

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110840.>]

Time: 18 July 1955, 4:40-5:05 p.m.

Location: Xihuating, Zhongnanhai

Chinese in Attendance: Director-General Huang Hua; Pu Shouchang (interpreter and recorder)

British in Attendance: Joude

O’Neill says that he received further instructions from Foreign Secretary MacMillan. MacMillan is now in Geneva, [and] so is [US Secretary of State John Foster] Dulles. MacMillan said Dulles asked him to transmit to Premier Zhou that Dulles was glad that the US government’s proposal was endorsed by the Chinese government. But Dulles raised two points regarding China’s draft joint communiqué. The first is about the date of the first meeting. Dulles suggested 1 August in lieu of 21 July for the first meeting. Dulles explained that 21 July is too early for the US government, which is presently focused on the Geneva Conference [of four powers] and it is impossible to appoint an ambassadorial level representative and instruct him to arrive at Geneva. Thus, Dulles asked Foreign Secretary MacMillan to suggest to Premier Zhou that, if the Chinese government agrees, the Chinese government and the US government simultaneously should release the following announcement.

O’Neill handed over Dulles’ suggested “News Announcement:”

“As a result of communication between Peiping [Beijing]<sup>36</sup> and Washington through the diplomatic channels of the United Kingdom, it has been agreed that the talks held last year between consular representatives of both sides at Geneva should continue on the ambassadorial level in order to promote the settling of the matter of repatriation of civilians who desire to return to their respective countries and to facilitate further discussions and settlement of certain other practical matters now at issue between the two sides. The first meeting of ambassadorial representatives of both sides will take place on 1 August 1955 at Geneva.”

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<sup>36</sup> Zhou Enlai felt offended when the U.S. used Peiping (Beiping), not Peking (Beijing) in its document. Peiping in Chinese means peace in the north, while Peking means northern capital. Peking was called “Peiping” by the Chinese Nationalists from 1928 to 1949, when its capital was in Nanjing (southern capital). In late September 1949, the Communist named Beijing, the capital of the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing Dynasties (1644-1911), as the new seat of the government for the PRC. The U.S. refused to use this name. In the document, Zhou’s hand-written notes could be seen. Zhou crossed “Peiping” and “Washington” and replaced them with “the People’s Republic of China” and “the United States”. Zhou ordered the typing and printing out the U.S. news announcement in Chinese.

O'Neill says that he is willing to explain the difference between the US draft and the Chinese draft. He says, first of all, the first three lines of the US draft [in English] are different from those in the Chinese draft. The Chinese draft states, "After consultations, it has been agreed that China and the United States ..." The US draft states, "As a result of communication between Peiping and Washington through the diplomatic channels of the United Kingdom, it has been agreed ..."

Premier Zhou asks, why [do the Americans] use the word "Peiping?" There is an old Chinese saying, "Name from the Master." What if we don't use "Washington," and give it another name? The Americans are always unreasonable. Here the Americans refer to US rulers, not the American people. British friends, as etiquette, you should not transmit this name.

O'Neill says that he was instructed to convey this name, and he is obligated to carry out this instruction. He says, maybe it could be seen as a matter of translation. He says Premier Zhou must know why the United States uses the names of the two cities. The name, which the US employed here is commonly used in the United States. Of course, he believes that the US does not expect China to use this name when releasing this communiqué in both Chinese and English.

Premier Zhou asks, why do [they] want us to even correct the name of a city? The US always attempts to impose its view on others. Peking [Beijing] is an old name, which has been in use for several hundred years. The US intends to provoke our feelings, but we would not treat the US like this. In our draft communiqué, we have not said, "after consultation, it has been agreed that the People's Republic of China and the United States ..." We know that the British friends are different, and they know our feelings. We also know the feelings of our British friends. For example, China no longer has an emperor. But when we mention the British queen, we address her as Her Majesty. This shows that we respect British custom.

O'Neill says that this is because we recognize each other and have established diplomatic relations.

Premier Zhou says it is not right even for countries not recognizing each other to provoke the feelings of each other. Right now, we need to create a genial atmosphere.

O'Neill says that he knows, and he believes that the US also acknowledges that, in the Chinese proposed draft communiqué, the use of the wording "China" and "the United States" indicates that China has taken some extra steps to attend to US difficulties. He says this name which the US government employs has been used to call this city for many years. There is no particular reason. American people still read this name in their newspapers. He says Premier Zhou mentioned just now that the US wants to force this [name] on to others. As to this issue, he could guarantee that the US imposes [this name] on itself, not China. The US could only use this name in its released

communiqué. The US is not imposing [the name] on China, [nor] asking China to use this name in its released communiqué.

Premier Zhou says we are not discussing the content of the communiqué, but only mentioning that the name provoked our feelings. As to whether we agree to the US proposed communiqué or not, we have to study it. We cannot accept Mr. Chargé d'affaires's explanation on behalf of the US, although we won't argue with each other.

O'Neill says that he is awaiting Premier Zhou's further reply. He also explains other differences between the US proposed communiqué and the Chinese draft communiqué. He says that in the US proposed communiqué, it says "the talks held last year between consular representatives of both sides at Geneva should *continue to be held* on the ambassadorial level." But in the Chinese draft, it says that "China and the United States raise the consular level talks held last year at Geneva to the ambassadorial level." He says this is not a fundamental difference. The other difference is on the return of civilians, which the US proposed communiqué reverses to its original formulation. Otherwise, there is little difference. He says, the instruction he received mentioned that Dulles suggested 2 o'clock Greenwich time on 20 July to release the communiqué, which is 6:00 p.m. tomorrow [19 July] Beijing time (Note: it is actually 10:00 a.m. on 20 July). He says he hopes that Premier Zhou would inform him of his decision as early as possible.

Premier Zhou says we have to think it over. Just now, I only stated my feelings. Mr. Chargé d'affaires, please convey my thanks to the British Foreign Secretary for transmitting this news announcement. It is not, however, possible to release it tomorrow.

O'Neill asks, does Premier Zhou have any suggestion regarding the US proposed date for releasing the communiqué for him to report to his government? Is this also part of the issue that Premier Zhou needs to consider further?

Premier Zhou says we regret that the US government couldn't agree to 21 July as the date which we proposed. We need to review this issue.

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## **Document No. 10.1**

### **Cable from Pu Shouchang to Qiao Quanhua, "The Premier's Specific Instructions," 17 July 1955**

[Source: PRC FMA 111-00009-03, 41-43. Obtained and translated by Yafeng Xia.

[https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114721.](https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114721)]

Top Secret



[To] Comrade [Qiao] Guanhua [Assistant Foreign Minister],

Regarding the preparatory work for the ambassadorial talks, the Premier [Zhou Enlai] has the following specific instructions. In addition to my oral report yesterday evening, I am delivering the following memo as requested:

First, please send the following telegrams:

1) Please telegram the full text of “Plan [for Sino-American Ambassadorial Talks]” to Ambassador Wang Bingnan, Minister Feng Xuan, and Ambassador Liu Xiao [Chinese Ambassador to the Soviet Union];

2) Please telegram other embassies the excerpt of the “Plan;”

3) Please notify Ambassador Wang to book a plane ticket for Geneva on the 19th or the 20th; if the Sino-American talks are to be postponed, it is OK to waste the ticket;

4) Please notify Li Huichuan [Counselor at the Chinese Embassy in the Soviet Union] and Qiu Yingjue [Diplomat at the Chinese Embassy in Yugoslavia] by telegram, telling them to go to Geneva to assist Feng Xuan with the preparatory work;

5) Please notify Minister Feng Xuan by telegram, telling him to leave for Geneva tomorrow and get in touch with the Soviet delegation via the Soviet Minister to Switzerland or the Soviet Consul General at Geneva. Please ask Comrade He Wei [Assistant Foreign Minister] to notify the Soviet embassy in Beijing and tell him to deliver the full text to [the Soviet embassy];

Second, please prepare speeches for two days for Ambassador Wang:

The following is the outline of the first day’s speech:

1) Introductory remarks and the proposal of two agendas;

2) If the US side doesn’t agree to the discussion of Agenda II, we should express disappointment and ask them to give it a second thought and respond the next day;

3) If the US side agrees to the discussion of Agenda II, [we should] propose items to be included in Agenda II (The Premier estimated three alternatives: a, the US side would agree to the discussion of Agenda II on the spot; b, the US side would reject the discussion of Agenda II on the spot; c, the US would agree to respond the next day. The Premier said that no matter what it might be, we should receive journalists after the meeting, announcing our request for topics to be discussed and the US responses. It seems necessary to prepare a speech for that purpose as well);

4) If the US side insists on keeping the content of the meeting secret, we should say that we would not make the detailed discussions known to the public, but the meeting agenda should be made public;

5) Regarding US nationals in China, the US might attack us. Please prepare a rebuttal based on the speech from the previous Sino-American meetings;

6) Regarding the issue of Chinese students in the US, please prepare a rebuttal, including the two points in the "Plan" (six out of twenty-seven Chinese students from the list provided by the US in 1954 have not returned to China. We have not received a list of the eighty-two Chinese students identified in 1955 from the US side). You should also mention that the deadline of 6 September [set by the US immigration authorities for their exit] is an issue.

7) Regarding US nationals in China, you should prepare a full notification. The Department of American and Oceanic Affairs has prepared a classified list of names as instructed by the Premier; You may refer to it;

8) Regarding our position that we only discuss US civilians, not military personnel, you should also prepare a speech (In addition, during our conversation tonight, you raised several possible situations. Please also prepare speeches based on your estimation);

The following is an outline of the speech for the second day:

1) [Ambassador Wang is] instructed to notify the US side that we have approved the exit of nine US nationals (For details, see the material prepared by Department of American and Oceanic Affairs); releasing three convicted US nationals before their jail time expires;

2) If the US side agrees to discuss Agenda II on the first day, except for the four points in Agenda II mentioned on the first day, we will not say anything else about it on the second day.

Please have all aforementioned speeches ready by tomorrow (the 18th). Please send for the Premier's review after being checked and approved by the Party Committee of the Foreign Ministry.

With best wishes,  
Pu Shouchang  
17 July 1955

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## Document No. 10.2

### Memo, Pu Shouchang to Qiao Guanhua, 18 July 1955

[Source: PRC FMA 111-00009-03, 44-45. Obtained and translated by Yafeng Xia.

[https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121753.](https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121753)]

[To] Comrade [Qiao] Guanhua,

I have reported your estimations of the possible US posture at the talks, which you mentioned to me during our conversation last night, to the Premier [Zhou Enlai]. The Premier said that if the US wants to use the two issues proposed in the Sino-American exchange of notes (i.e., the return of civilians from both sides to their respective countries and other practical matters at issue between the two sides), as the US side stated, it depends on how the first agenda is going to be resolved. Then we can discuss the second agenda issues. We then have to make detailed inquiries into the content of the second agenda, which the US side mentioned. Does it include topics such as preparation for higher-level talks between China and the United States in order “to lessen and eliminate the Sino-American tension in the Taiwan Strait area?” The Premier said that the point should be included in the speech.

In addition, the Premier wanted you to relay his two other opinions to the core leadership meeting of the Foreign Ministry:

1) Telegrams regarding the Premier’s instructions to be issued should also be marked “extremely urgent” and signed off by deputy foreign minister Zhang [Wentian]. There is no need to send for the Premier’s review.

2) When Comrade He Wei delivers the full text of the “Plan” to the Soviet side, please also deliver a copy of the Sino-American exchange of notes in both Chinese and English to the Soviet embassy. Please explain to them that although we have mentioned this issue in our letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the delivery today is a formal notice. If Britain and the US mention this issue, the Soviet Union could then say that the Chinese have formally notified it.

The Central Committee [of the CCP] has approved the Plan without making any changes. Please inform me of the opinions of the Party Committee of the Foreign Ministry so that I can report to the Premier.

With best regards,  
Pu Shouchang  
In the early morning of 18 July

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### **Document No. 10.3**

#### **Cable from Dong Yueqian to Zhang Wentian, 30 July 1955**

*[Source: PRC FMA 111-00009-03, 46-47. Obtained and translated by Yafeng Xia.*

*[https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/120386.](https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/120386)]*

[To] Deputy Minister Zhang [Wentian],

Yesterday evening the Premier [Zhou Enlai] notified me of several things:

First, Deputy Minister Zhang, please appoint a “special supervisory group” to supervise the daily work of the Sino-American ambassadorial talks and provide opinions. Outside the Foreign Ministry, please invite Ling Yun [Director-General of Political Protection Bureau, Ministry of Public Security] to join. Zhang Yan [Vice Director, Foreign Affairs Office, State Council] and Pu Shouchang will serve as liaisons to the “group;”

Second, Deputy Minister Zhang, please work out a detailed plan regarding the release of eleven US spies (e.g., time of receiving foreign envoys and the time of departing from our borders);

Third, please type and print out copies of the “Instructions” for the Sino-American ambassadorial talks by tomorrow and ask Comrade He Wei to deliver a copy to the Soviet embassy (Note: We have been working on this throughout the night);

Fourth, please draft a detailed plan regarding the settlement of US nationals in China (including criminals and civilians);

Fifth, please consider the issue of propaganda work and make arrangements for this;

It might be necessary to discuss these issues at the core leadership meeting of the Foreign Ministry. Could you chair such a meeting at 9:30 a.m. or 10:00 a.m. this morning? In addition to regular members, we need to invite Ling Yun, Xu Yongying [Deputy Director-General, Treaty Committee, Foreign Ministry] and Gong Peng [Director-General, Information Department, Foreign Ministry]. Please give instructions!

We sent the instructions to Comrade [Wang] Bingnan overnight. We have issued a press release of Bingnan’s speech after his arrived at Geneva with the Premier’s approval. A pronouncement and news summary regarding the release of eleven convicted Americans have been drafted. They have been sent to the Premier after [Vice Foreign Minister] Comrade [Zhang] Hanfu’s review and approval. The Ministry of Public Security will announce the release of the Americans and escort them out of Beijing. Comrade Hanfu thought to release them on the 30th [is an issue] because the formal

announcement would be at 4:00 p.m. on the 1st of August at the ambassadorial talks. It is too far away. So it is better to release the Americans tomorrow.

[...]

Dong Yueqian [Director-General, General Office, Foreign Ministry]  
In the early morning of the 30<sup>th</sup>

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#### **Document No. 10.4**

##### **Cable from Ma Lie to Zhang Wentian, 31 July 1955**

[Source: PRC FMA 111-00009-03, 48. Obtained and translated by Yafeng Xia.

[https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/120387.](https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/120387)]

[To] Deputy Minister Zhang [Wentian],

I was on duty the previous night and the Premier [Zhou Enlai] asked me to relay to you two things [sic]:

First, please appoint a “special supervisory group” for negotiations in Geneva. Comrade Ling Yun from the Ministry of Public Security should be included. Please inform the Premier after you have decided on a list of names. The special supervisory group should envision various situations and propose plans [for the Sino-American ambassadorial talks]. Comrades Zhang Yan and Pu Shouchang may attend the meetings of the group on a rotating basis.

Second, please propose separate settlement plans for each of the US nationals in the four different categories, including the convicted Americans.

Third, regarding the Sino-American talks at Geneva, please make arrangements for propaganda work.

With best regards,

Ma Lie

In the early morning of the 31st of July

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#### **Document No. 11.1**

##### **Cable from the Chinese Foreign Ministry, “Sending the Plan for the Sino-American Talks,” 18 July 1955**

[Source: PRC FMA 111-00014-01, 1. Obtained by and translated by Yafeng Xia.

[https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110842.](https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110842)]

[...]

### **Sending the Plan for the Sino-American Talks**

To Ambassador Wang [Bingnan], Minister Feng [Xuan], and Ambassador Liu [Xiao]:  
(secret)

The full text of the "Plan for the Sino-US Ambassadorial Talks in Geneva" is hereby sent [to you]. Please act in accordance with this.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
18 July 1955

Attached: Full text of the plan

[...]

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### **Document No. 11.2**

#### **Plan for the Sino-US Ambassadorial Talks in Geneva, 18 July 1955**

*[Source: PRC FMA 111-00014-01, 2-5. Obtained by and translated by Yafeng Xia.*

*[https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/120388.](https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/120388)]*

Top Secret

I. On 13 July, the US government, through the British government, suggested to our government that China and the US each send an ambassadorial level representative to Geneva for talks, which would aid "the repatriation of civilians to their own countries" and for "settling other practical matters at issue between the two sides." On the 15th, we replied to the US through the British government, agreeing to the US proposal. We also proposed July 21 as the date for the first meeting.

II. It looks as if the US proposal is a result of various outside pressures. The US hopes to settle some concrete issues under conditions favorable to it. Should these issues not be settled satisfactorily, the US would use this to accuse us of dilatoriness so as to shun them from intense outside pressure. The US also expects to avoid the discussion of the situation in the Taiwan area, excluding Menon's mediation, boycotting the proposal we discussed with Menon that the Chinese and US envoys hold talks in the Soviet, British and Indian capitals. Should some of the issues on the US agenda be settled, the US might decide its next move. In sum, the US is adopting a wavering and step-by-step strategy.

Our policy for this meeting: Intensify pressure on the US; strive to resolve some issues so as to make preparations for higher-level Sino-American talks about relaxing and eliminating tension in the Taiwan area. This meeting should not impede but rather will aid the discussion of the Taiwan issue at the four-power Geneva summit, as well as through the mediation efforts of the Soviet Union, Britain and India.

III. Our tactics at the meeting: In order to carry out the aforementioned policy and to foil US sabotage, we should probe and find out if the US is willing to use the meeting as a step for even higher-level talks between China and the US about relaxing and eliminating tension in the Taiwan area. This would play a supporting role in the four-power summit and might create more pressure on the United States.

Should the US agree to a meeting on 21 July, we should propose two agendas for discussion at the first meeting: 1) The return of civilians from both sides to their respective countries; 2) To begin the preparatory stage for China's proposal at Bandung that China and the US should sit down and talk about relaxing and eliminating tensions in the Taiwan area. If the US agrees to Agenda II, then the Sino-American talks would be held simultaneously and in coordination with the four-power summit. The latter scenario is improbable.

Should the US reject 21 July for the beginning of the Sino-American talks and delay it to a time after the four-power summit, or delay in replying [making a meeting on 21 July impossible] to our proposal, the Soviet Union would be justified to demand the discussion of the situation in the Taiwan area at the four-power summit. Under such circumstances, whether we should propose the two aforementioned agendas at the Sino-American meeting depends on the result of the four-power summit.

IV. Should the Sino-American talks be limited to the return of nationals, then it is about civilian repatriation. Don't touch on convicted US military personnel! The US used the word "civilian repatriation" in its documents to us. You may add, although we have no right to discuss the issue of convicted US military personnel, we are willing to notify the US side of the situation on all US nationals in China. 1) US nationals: Some have applied to return to the US, others have not; 2) Convicted US civilians; 3) Convicted US military personnel; 4) US POWs who refuse repatriation. You may reiterate our lenient policy toward the convicted US personnel. You may also point out that all US nationals who have no unresolved cases and apply to return to the US will get an exit permit. As for Chinese nationals in the U.S., we should first point out that, after the Geneva Conference, the US side notified us of exit permits for twenty-seven Chinese students in 1954, but as of today, six of them have not returned to China. In 1955, the US side notified us of exit permits for eighty-two Chinese students. Because no name list was provided, we have no way of verifying their whereabouts. When China approved the departure of twenty-seven US nationals, we notified the US of all details in a timely fashion. All of them left China. Secondly, we should raise the following requests: 1) The US side should provide us the number and a name list of all Chinese nationals in the US;

2) The US should agree that China and the US entrust a third party to represent its nationals in the other country, primarily to advocate for their return. We propose that we entrust India. If the US representative shows a willingness to discuss this matter, we plan to voluntarily notify the US that the Chinese government has approved exit visas for nine US nationals and released three convicted US civilians who behaved well before their sentences expired.

V. Should the US agree to discuss the preparatory work for the Sino-American negotiations on 21 July and ask about the details, we may indicate that it includes members of the negotiation team, time, location and topics.

VI. Wang Bingnan, Chinese Ambassador to Poland, is to be appointed the representative of the Sino-American talks; Li Huichuan, a counselor at the Chinese embassy in the Soviet Union and Lin Ping, a commissioner at the Department of American and Oceanic Affairs at the Foreign Ministry, would assist [Wang]. Qiu Yingjue, [a diplomat] at the Chinese embassy in Yugoslavia, would serve as interpreter and stenographer. Feng Xuan, Chinese minister to Switzerland, and staff members at the Chinese delegation in Switzerland and Consulate General in Geneva should all assist in this endeavor.

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## **Document No. 12**

### **Additional Instructions Regarding the Sino-American Ambassadorial Talks at Geneva, 26 July 1955**

*[Source: PRC FMA 111-00009-04, 49-50. Obtained and translated by Yafeng Xia.*  
[https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114722.](https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114722)]

#### **Additional Instructions regarding the Sino-American Ambassadorial Talks at Geneva**

1. The previous plan was formulated based on the assumption that the first meeting would take place on 21 July. Thus, some of the steps were designed to coordinate with the Four-Power Conference. Now that the Four-Power Conference is over, these items for coordinating with the Four-Power Conference are no longer necessary. Thus, our policy for the talks, which are scheduled to take place on 1 August, is: to intensify pressure on the United States; to strive to resolve some issues so as to make preparations for higher-level Sino-American talks for relaxing and eliminating tension in the Taiwan area. This meeting should not impede but rather will aid the mediation efforts of the Soviet Union, Britain, and India toward improving Sino-American relations.

2. Regarding our concrete measures at the meeting, we should still propose two agendas for the talks at the first meeting: (a) The return of civilians from both sides to



their respective countries; (b) To begin the preparatory stage for China's proposal at Bandung that China and the US should sit down and talk about relaxing and eliminating tensions in the Taiwan area. But we should modify some of the specific steps, as the Four-Power Conference is over. If the US representative is not authorized to discuss Agenda II, we should still announce it to the media. But we don't have to announce it immediately after the first day's meeting.

3. The policy of not touching on US military personnel remains unchanged. But we may articulate it differently—[we may] not say that we do not have the right to touch on the issue, instead say that the issue needs special treatment.

4. In the original plan, it states that if the US representative shows willingness to discuss this matter, we plan to voluntarily notify the US at the second meeting that the Chinese government has granted nine US nationals exit permits and released three convicted US civilians who behaved well before completing their jail time. In order to gain the initiative at the talks, we may notify the US side of the situation of all Americans in China and the news regarding exit permits for the nine convicted US nationals and the release of three condemned Americans (two being freed before completing jail time and one released when jail time served). We don't have to wait for the second meeting.

5. Please have the formalities completed by 31 July regarding the exit permits for the nine US nationals and three Americans to be freed. They should be notified individually and should choose their own date of departure...For the purposes of external propaganda work, we should issue a press release at the time of exit of the three Americans freed.

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### **Document No. 13**

#### **Cable from the Chinese Foreign Ministry, "Please Postpone the Ambassadorial-level Talks to the Afternoon on the 1st of August," 30 July 1955**

*[Source: PRC FMA 111-00014-02, 7. Obtained and translated by Yafeng Xia.*

*[https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114723.](https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114723)*

[To] Ambassador Wang [Bingnan] and Minister Feng [Xuan],

Please try your best to postpone the first meeting of the Sino-American talks to after 4:00 p.m. on the 1st of August so that we can have sufficient time to send you the negotiation instructions and the text of the speech.

The Foreign Ministry  
30 July 1955

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## **Document No. 14**

### **Instructions on the Sino-American Ambassadorial Level Talks at Geneva (Excerpt), 30 July 1955**

*[Source: PRC FMA 111-00014-03, 9-17. Translated by Yafeng Xia  
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114724>.]*

Top Secret<sup>37</sup>

1. The US government's proposal to hold the Sino-American ambassadorial talks is the result of outside pressure. The successful conclusion of the Four-Power Geneva Summit enhances this pressure. The publication of the Sino-American joint news announcement on the talks has been very well received. Many hope that the talks will relax tensions in the Taiwan Strait area. At present, Walter F. George, chair of US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, has proposed holding talks at a higher-level—at the ministers' level. Even people in power, such as [John Foster] Dulles and [Dwight] Eisenhower, cannot openly oppose such talks. In his talk with journalists on 26 July, Dulles declared that the scope of the Sino-American talks would be broader than the previous talks at the consul level. The Americans are ready to discuss the return of civilians and the repatriation of US spies. He also indicated that the United States is prepared to discuss any issues directly related to Sino-American relations.

In line with the above circumstances, it may be inferred that the United States, at the ambassadorial talks, hopes that our country will release the eleven detained US spies and the issue of the return of civilians will be settled on conditions favorable to the US. Meanwhile, the US will not shut the door for higher-level Sino-American talks in order to probe our intentions. They aim to create a two-China status quo for the purpose of relaxing Sino-American tensions and improving their isolated and passive status in the Taiwan Strait area. If the ambassadorial talks go smoothly and outside pressure on the US continues to mount and, in particular, if our national defense power strengthens, the possibility of holding higher-level Sino-American talks and peacefully recovering the off-shore islands will be greatly increased. This is the prospect we strive for.

Thus our basic policy at the ambassadorial talks, at the outset, is to take initiatives to announce that "China had released eleven convicted American military personnel." [The purpose is] to liquidate any US pretexts, pressure the Americans in order to solve some concrete issues and lay a foundation for higher-level Sino-American talks. This will also create an isolated and passive situation for the United States on the issue of Taiwan.

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<sup>37</sup> The Chinese Foreign Ministry Archives shows that this document was cabled to Ambassador Wang [Bingnan] on 31 July 1955.

2. In light of the above situation, we should propose two agendas at the first meeting on 1 August: (a) The return of civilians from both sides to their respective countries; (b) Other practical matters at issue between the two sides. Regarding the second agenda, we should indicate that each side may propose issues for discussion they deem necessary.

If the US side insists on the formulation of the news announcement, that is, “the issue of the repatriation of civilians to their respective countries,” we may agree.

We plan to only discuss the issue of agendas at the first meeting. In light of our voluntary release of eleven convicted US military personnel, we expect that both sides will reach an agreement on the agenda smoothly. If the other side disagrees with our proposed agenda, we should patiently listen to their opinions. As to general issues proposed by the other side, we should tell them to wait until we discuss the second agenda. Regarding this, the method the Soviet Union adopted in handling agenda-setting at the Four-Power Geneva Conference is an instance for reference. As to the rules for the talks, open sessions are to our advantage. So we should strive for open sessions. It is all right to hold restricted sessions if necessary. It is unlikely that the other side would insist on closed-door sessions at the outset. But if the other side insists on closed-door sessions, we will voice no objection.

In addition, for the purpose of internal preparedness, we may take the initiative to suggest that the two sides hold meetings every other day. But after the first meeting on the agendas, both sides should hold a meeting to discuss practical matters the following day. If the other side insists on meeting every day, we should agree. But after meetings on the first agenda are over, there should be a one-day recess. The meeting time from the second day on should be in the morning so that there will be enough time to ask for instructions from Beijing.

When discussing the first agenda, we should notify the other side of the conditions of eighty Americans in four categories: (a) Forty-two US civilians in China: Some have applied to leave China for the US, but others have not; (b) Twenty-seven convicted US civilians; (c) Sixteen US POWs who refuse repatriation; (d) Two convicted US military personnel (a name list is attached). Meanwhile, we should reiterate our policies toward the different categories of US personnel and notify them of the measures we are adopting.

[...]

Regarding the issue of Chinese nationals in the United States—we must point out that, after the Geneva Conference, the US informed us of the return of Chinese students on four occasions. Of the twenty-seven persons mentioned on the first three occasions, six have still not returned to China. On the fourth notification, i.e., 8 April

1955, we were only informed that the total number was seventy-six, but without a name list we have no way to verify whether they have returned or not. After approving the exit permits of twenty-seven US nationals from China, we already informed the US promptly and in detail. These people have all left China. Secondly, we should raise the following claims to the Americans: (a) The US should provide us with the number and a list of names of all Chinese nationals, including students in the United States. (b) The US government should revoke all prohibitions and measures preventing the departure of the Chinese nationals and students, including the time limit, which is a disguised [form of] detention. (c) The US should re-supply China with a list of the seventy-six Chinese students who the US granted exit permits in its fourth notification [on 8 April 1955]. (d) The US should agree that the US and China will each entrust a third country of its own choice to take charge of the affairs of nationals in the other country. First of all is the issue of their return. We propose India.

If the US satisfies our needs, we could move to Agenda II.

4. While discussing Agenda II, we must stress in principle that it is important for both sides to make efforts in order to relax tensions. On a concrete issue, we are going to propose the issue of embargo and China's preparatory work for a Sino-American negotiation mechanism, which was established at the time of the Bandung Conference, in order to relax and eliminate tensions in the Taiwan Strait area.

Regarding the US embargo against China—we may propose that it is unfair and irrational. We all know it doesn't work. The US embargo has failed to achieve its objective. But it is detrimental to the Chinese and American people and all people of the world. We believe it is time for the US to terminate its embargo policy against China.

Regarding preparations for higher-level Sino-American talks, we are going to propose for discussion with regards to members, time, location, and topics. One tentative topic we propose is "to relax and eliminate Sino-American tensions in the Taiwan Strait area." While discussing this issue, we may suggest that both sides should propose their own topics for discussion at higher-level talks. The members of higher-level talks are Chinese and US foreign ministers. The location is New Delhi, but we would concede to Geneva if necessary.

5. We should be prepared to discuss various issues the other side might propose. US journalists have speculated [about this] quite a bit. Dulles, in his speech on 26 July, stated that the US would propose "the issue of guaranteeing the safety of civilian airline flyers not to be shot down." We should give attention to and have consideration for what issues they might propose for discussion, study the relevant materials, and consider our countermeasures.

At present, we are considering the following issues the other side might propose and our countermeasures:

Should the other side raise “the matter of the assets of US nationals in China,” we should indicate that it must discuss the assets of both sides in the other country because China has assets in the United States. If the other side insists on discussing this issue, we may suggest, because of the many technical aspects involved, that a separate meeting should be convened for this purpose.

Should the other side raise the issue of the shooting down of the Cathay airline flyer and the so-called issue “of guaranteeing the safety of civilian airliners not to be shot down,” we should point out that the shooting down of the Cathay airliner was purely accidental.<sup>38</sup> Such [a] thing has not happened again since then. But US military planes have continuously invaded Chinese air space. The US side should pledge to stop it.

Should the US side raise the issue of cease-fire in the Taiwan Strait area, we should point out that there is no issue of a cease-fire between China and the United States since there is no war between the two countries. If the US insists on discussing the issue of a cease-fire and asks our opinions, we should raise the issue of the withdrawal of US forces from Taiwan and the Taiwan Strait area. We should also point out that such kind of discussion would not lead to an agreement because the issue of reducing tensions in the Taiwan area is a topic for higher-level talks. Each side should voice its opinion on any issue at the higher-level talks.

In line with the aforementioned speculation, should the other side continuously raise issues that could not lead to the conclusion of an agreement in discussing the second agenda, we should ask the US to stop its interference in China and suspend sending bad elements to China to get involved in illegal activities.

6. The Four-Power Geneva Summit, together with the Bandung Conference, has improved international relations, creating favorable conditions for further relaxing international tensions and establishing mutual trust among countries. This is a new situation. Under such circumstances, we should adopt an active attitude for the settlement of international issues. We should adopt an identical attitude toward this round of the Sino-American talks. We should maintain a resolute stand and uphold a consultative and conciliatory attitude. Thus, we should respect each other and pay attention to courtesy. When the other side wants to speak, let them do so even if it is full of nonsense. We should first listen to his opinion calmly and then criticize and refute him with reasoning. We should welcome any positive elements, even if very small, in his speech. We should respond to the other side’s speeches and suggestions after careful consideration and study. As far as our side is concerned, we should avoid raising old contentious accounts and stress the importance of mutual efforts for relaxing tensions.

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<sup>38</sup> On 23 July 1954, a Cathay Pacific Douglas DC-4 aircraft, while en route from Bangkok to Hong Kong, was shot down near Hainan Island by the armed forces of the People’s Republic of China.

If the other side raises old accounts, we should adopt a persuasive attitude for resolving the issue. In this regard, you are advised to study the formulation, wording, limits and spirit of each issue in Premier Zhou [Enlai's] speech at the National People's Congress.

7. Rules and Points for Attention at the Talks:

- 1) Ask for instructions on every matter of the talk. Don't take any unauthorized action! Strictly observe the FM's rule of asking for instructions and reporting at all times.
- 2) Regarding each meeting, consider all feasible options and ask for instructions from the FM in advance in order to get responses on time.
- 3) After each meeting, promptly send the FM a brief report so that the FM might give instructions on time.
- 4) When reporting on the talks, check meeting minutes for accuracy. Don't exaggerate certain aspects or report only the good news but not the bad.

Form a negotiating team headed by Comrade Wang Bingnan, including Comrades Feng Xuan, Shen Ping [Acting Consul-General, Chinese Consulate General in Geneva], Lin Ping, and Li Huichuan to engage in all preparatory work.

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**Document No. 15**

**Cable from the Foreign Ministry to Comrade Wang Bingnan, "On the Text of Speech, Instructions, and Points of Attention at the Sino-American Talks," 31 July 1955**

*[Source: PRC FMA 111-00014-04, 25-27. Translated by Yafeng Xia.*

[https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114725.](https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114725)]

Top Secret

[To] Comrade [Wang] Bingnan:

You should have received the FM instructions dated 30 July. We are sending you the text of the speech for 1 August and instructions for its release to the press. Please follow the following points for attention:

1. Meeting personnel: It is reported that there are only two to three people on the US negotiation team. As for our side, the FM agrees with your opinion: a five-person team, including Li Huichuan, Lin Ping, Shen Ping, Qiu Yingjue, and you (If the US Consul General is not present, Shen Ping should also not be at the talks);

2. It has been decided that you will announce the release of eleven convicted US military personnel at 3:00 p.m. Geneva time, on 1 August;
3. When entering the meeting room and encountering a US representative, you may exchange a few words of greetings before taking your seat (You may also take the initiative to shake his hands). This will surely create a relaxing atmosphere from the very beginning;
4. When the meeting starts, try to speak first. If the other party wants to speak first, you should agree. But you should tell him that you have a piece of news to announce. Then read the first paragraph in the speech (Eleven convicted US military personnel were freed on 31 July and left Beijing the same day). After the other party speaks, you may continue with the rest of your text of the speech;
5. If the other party makes no slanderous remarks in his speech and only asks you to clarify concrete points, you may say that you will respond after consultations. Thus, you will be able to return to the main topic of the meeting;
6. Regarding the meeting agenda, after reading the prepared speeches from the FM, you may engage the other party in a conversation. You don't have to read from a prepared text;
7. You should make good use of the recess. If the other party raises matters which need sufficient time for consultation, then you should request a brief recess. If it is an issue of great importance, which needs instructions from the FM, the meeting should be adjourned until the next day. In short, if you are good at utilizing this tool, you will be able to conduct the meeting in a calm and reliable fashion;
8. Generally, you will make use of the press release (for the day's text of content) rather than the press conference. If [you are] asked about the content of the meeting, you may give an objective briefing. You should ask the FM for instructions if you need to hold a press conference. Your speech upon arriving at Geneva was not approved by the FM beforehand. This is a mistake, which you should pay close attention to. After the first meeting, you should not hold a press conference. A press release will do. Comrade Li Huichuan will be responsible for liaison with media;

Please notify the Soviet Consul General and the Indian Consul General of the content of the day's meeting. Comrade Feng Xuan may be responsible for this. Sometimes you may personally take care of it. According to Comrade Huan Xiang's [Chinese Charge D'Affairs to London] report, Menon will arrive at Geneva and stay for a few days. You may brief him on the meeting and our general position. Don't rush to respond to his news and opinions. Report to the FM as soon as possible.

Foreign Ministry

31 July 1955

Attachments: The Text of Speech and the Issue of News Release

Attachment I: The Text of Speech for the First Meeting of Sino-American talks

[...]

Attachment II: The Issue of News Release during the Talks

[We] should strive to make the talks public so that we can pressure the U.S. in our propaganda work in due course. It is unlikely that the U.S. side would ask for restricted sessions at the first meeting. If the U.S. side raises the issue and insists on it, [you] may agree. But the content of the meeting should be made public through a mutually agreed announcement.

1) Whether the talks would be made public or not, we should take the initiative to issue a joint communiqué when an agreement is reached. Of course, we could not accept any wording of slander and libel, and we should not propose any wording the other party couldn't accept.

2) We may adopt two different methods in issuing news: the first method is to distribute press releases to journalists; another is to hold press conferences. Generally, you should adopt the first one. The content of press release should include the main content from the speeches of the day's meeting. When necessary, give a brief introduction to the day's meeting. Only if there is a major development in the talk, which needs to be made public, should you hold a press conference. No matter what method, be faithful to the fact. Don't subjectively analyze the other's position.

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## **Document No. 16**

**Cable from the Chinese Foreign Ministry to Wang Bingnan, "Instructions for the Third Meeting of the Sino-US Ambassadorial Talks," 3 August 1955**

*[Source: PRC FMA 111-00015-01, 1-3. Translated by Yafeng Xia.*

*[https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110848.](https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110848)]*

Top Secret

[To] Ambassador Wang Bingnan:

1. Summary account on the 2nd meeting on 2 August received.



Our act of releasing eleven US spies before their sentence times expired has aroused broad responses among Asian countries, making the US position more passive. The US does not have many cards in its hand. As expected, the US seized the opportunity to ask us to release more civilians and plans to raise the issue of 500 missing US service members from the Korean War. Nonetheless, in his talk with journalists on 2 August, Dulles had to leave the door open for even higher-level talks. This demonstrates how hard the pressure [on the US] is from various sides. As to our policy, we decided in our cabled instructions on 31 July: only after the first agenda has achieved a certain result can we approve the exit and release of civilians. At present, our target of struggle is to win US concessions on the return of our nationals and students. The focus of this issue is to have India take care of the affairs of our nationals and students. In view of the inaccurate information at hand, it may be passive for us to propose a list of names. The best way to deal with this is to propose a total number (about 400 people) and some typical cases of the detained students. As to the other party's complaints against us, you may give him a dose of his own medicine. Should the other party hand over a list of missing US military personnel, we may tell them honestly that these are old accounts that will not aid in settling issues. We have the issue of more than 14,000 Chinese People's Volunteers who were captured. These people have actually been detained. We are not afraid of discussing this issue, but we think this kind of discussion will not aid in settlement of current matters.

At the meeting on the 2nd [of August], the other party spoke first. Our speeches addressed their issues. On the contrary, the other party failed to respond to our questions. Thus, at the meeting on the 4th [of August], we may invite the other party to speak first. If the other party declines to talk first, we may speak about the so-called issue of ill-feeling and ask the other party to state its attitude about our four proposals.

Attached is an outline on the issue of "ill-feeling" and live examples of our students being prevented from returning for your proper use at the meeting.

2. Telegraph dated 12:00 noon, 3 August received. Agree with your evaluation and manner of handling it. When reprimanding the other party as unreasonable for demanding the release of all US nationals, be careful. [It might appear as though] we are not going to release one more or everyone in any case. We should stress the importance of the efforts on both sides. As for the other party's claim that there is no longer [a] hindrance for [Chinese] students to leave the US, and there is no need to entrust a third party, we should point out that we know there are many students who are willing to return. They dare not express their wishes, however, under various pressures. They may also be forced to change their minds after expressing their desires to return. Many of them have financial difficulties. Thus, only after entrusting a satisfactory third party to look after their affairs could this matter be handled reasonably.

Foreign Ministry  
3:30 a.m., 3 August

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## Document No. 17

### Cable from the Chinese Foreign Ministry to Wang Bingnan, "An Analysis of the Third Meeting," 7 August 1955

[Source: PRC FMA 111-00015-09, 55-57. Obtained and translated by Yafeng Xia.

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121756.>]

[To] Ambassador Wang Bingnan:

We have received your telegrams of a synopsis of the third meeting, the speech of the US representative on US restrictions on the return of Chinese students and your analysis of the third meeting.

We agree categorically with your analysis of the present situation.

At the third meeting, we did not forcefully refute the US argument that there are no longer any restrictions on the return of Chinese students. This is a mistake. In fact, with the so-called abolishment of restrictions, we had already addressed the issue in Attachment II. We used the example of Qian Xuesen's<sup>39</sup> letter to [Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress] Chen Shutong to show that the so-called abolishing of restrictions has not relieved the difficulties for the Chinese students to return to China. This leads us to our position of inviting a third party to take care of this issue. Thus, if we only said that we welcomed the so-called no more restrictions without pointing out that the actuality was the opposite, this would show that our position on third-party representation was groundless and weak. To have India as our third-party representative is the core issue of the first agenda.

[...]

Foreign Ministry  
2:00 a.m., 7 August 1955

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<sup>39</sup> Qian Xuesen was a Chinese national who was educated in the United States. He was one of the founders of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory at the California Institute of Technology in the 1940s. During the Second Red Scare of the later 1940s and early 1950s, the United States government accused Qian of having communist sympathies, and he was stripped of his security clearance in 1950. Qian then decided to return to China, but instead was detained at Terminal Island near Los Angeles. After spending five years under virtual house arrest, Qian was released and returned to China in September 1955.

## Document No. 18

### Cable from the Chinese Foreign Ministry to Wang Bingnan, "Talking Points for the Fourth Meeting," 7 August 1955

[Source: PRC FMA 111-00016-01, 5-9. Translated by Yafeng Xia.

[https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114726.](https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114726)]

Top Secret

[To] Ambassador Wang [Bingnan]:

At the Sino-American talks, our four proposals regarding the first agenda, except for the third item (re-supplying a name list of 76 Chinese students), have not been satisfied. We still have to struggle with the US over the three other items in order to achieve success. Given possible counter-arguments on these three items which the US side might raise, we offer the following rebuttals:

1) On Item I (Ask the US to provide us a name list of all Chinese nationals, including students in the United States):

At the third meeting, the US side proposed that this item is beyond the scope of this talk because it only discusses the issue of those civilians who are willing to return to their respective countries. It looks as if the US side will reiterate this view at the fourth meeting. It may clearly state that this issue involves the legal jurisdiction of the Jiang Jieshi clique and thus they cannot hand us a complete list of Chinese nationals.

In rebuttal, we must first point out that we have given the other side a complete list of US nationals in China. Thus, the other side has the same obligation to account for the condition of Chinese nationals. Because the other side has not yet supplied a complete list of Chinese nationals, we cannot find out who is willing to return. It thus hinders the suitable settlement of the return of nationals to their respective country, which is currently under discussion. If the US side clearly and explicitly raises the issue of the legal jurisdiction of the Jiang Jieshi clique, we must solemnly point out that it no longer has the right to represent the Chinese people. Nor do they have the right to look after the interests of Chinese nationals in the United States. Moreover, the majority of the relatives of the Chinese nationals live in mainland China. If the US is vicious and disgusting in words and attitude while raising the issue, we should further warn that if the US is not interested in making this talk meaningful, then we hope that the US side will not use the legal jurisdiction of the Jiang Jieshi clique as a subterfuge and not evade a settlement on the issue of the return of Chinese civilians. Lastly, we should point out that both sides must give identical treatment to the issue of the return of civilians so as to bring the issue to a fair and equitable settlement. We also need to stress that only after taking appropriate measures by both sides to reach a suitable and favorable solution can the issue of the return of civilians be settled. Thus, we raise the claim again that the US side supplies a complete list of Chinese nationals.

2) On Item II (Ask the US government to revoke its restriction on the exit of Chinese nationals and students):

At the second and third meetings, the US side claimed that though there were restrictions in the past, these have been lifted. There is no longer anything obstructing Chinese nationals and students from leaving [the US]. The US side will continue to reiterate this point.

We must use concrete examples to prove that Chinese nationals, including students, are still being prevented from leaving. Meanwhile, due to various pressures, many dare not express their wishes to return [to China]. Thus, there is no guarantee of what the US has claimed. The only fair solution is to have a third country look after the affairs of the Chinese nationals in the US.

3) On Item IV (Ask the US to agree that both sides entrust a third country to look after its nationals in the other country)

At the third meeting, the US side suggested that there are no restrictions upon Chinese nationals who wish to return [to China]. Thus, all US nationals in China should be released. It is not necessary to entrust a third country to look after them. At the fourth meeting, the US side might continue to delay in replying to our proposal. But the US cannot wholly reject our proposal and delay in responding. Thus, we expect that the US side might propose counter-suggestions, i.e., to form an international committee that constitutes countries agreed upon by both sides. Or the alleged Indian proposal, i.e., a joint committee formed by the Red Cross Societies of several countries agreed upon by both sides or the Red Cross Society of one particular country visits China and the United States, investigating civilians from both countries who are willing to return and aiding in their return. The disadvantage of this proposal is that after a limited period of investigation, the majority of Chinese nationals [in the US] may not want to return [to China]. This will give the US a handle. After our strong resistance, the US might suggest another counter-proposal, i.e., each side entrusts a third country to look after the issue of the repatriation of civilians. If the US side proposes this, we may agree eventually. But at present, we should focus our attention on refuting the US counter-argument and foiling the US counter-proposal, which is not favorable to us.

We must first explain the necessity of this proposal. We may use examples of Chinese students being prevented from leaving. We may also point out that many Chinese nationals dare not express their wishes due to various pressures. They may have to change their minds afterward. Additionally, many Chinese nationals encounter great difficulties in raising money for travel expenses. Thus, it is necessary to entrust a third party to look after the interests of Chinese nationals and assist them in returning. If the US proposes the formation of an international committee, or Joint Committee of Red Cross Societies, or Red Cross Society of one particular country to aid in the return of

civilians, we must point out that looking after the affairs of civilians, including the affairs of their return, is constant work which could not be handled by a committee or Red Cross Society of one particular country in a certain period of time. Many Chinese nationals who have been prevented from returning have made arrangements to stay. Even if they are allowed to leave, they need time to take care of and terminate their work in the United States. Many students who have not completed their studies in the US cannot leave for now. But once their studies are over, they will need assistance in making travel arrangements. For various reasons, some Chinese nationals have chosen to live in the US for the time being. But they may change their minds anytime, and it is imperative to have a third party ready to offer assistance to them. Thus, relying on one committee to investigate and offer help for a limited period of time will not do. If the US side suggests that both sides entrust a third party to look after their nationals who are willing to be repatriated, they might suggest that both sides entrust the UK so as to bypass India. We reserve our right to comment on the scope of power of the third party. On the US proposal of entrusting the UK for both China and the US, we should point out on the spot that China and the US have sovereign rights to decide on their own choice. The Chinese government has decided to entrust India.

Foreign Ministry  
10:00 a.m., 7 August 1955

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### **Document No. 19**

#### **Cable from the Chinese Foreign Ministry to Wang Bingnan, "Talking Points for the Fifth Meeting," 10 August 1955**

*[Source: PRC FMA 111-00016-06, 21-24. Translated by Yafeng Xia.*

*[https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110855.](https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110855)]*

Top Secret

[To] Comrade [Wang] Bingnan:

[...]

[We] agree to your telegram of 3:00 p.m., 8 August, regarding the US willingness to reach an agreement and resolve some concrete issues.

Western journalists have published many speculative reports about the Sino-American talks. The US Army fabricated stories about how we mistreated eleven US fliers, and the US and [South Korean President Syngman] Rhee intentionally created tension over the Korean issue. But people all over the world, including the American people, demanded results from the Sino-American talks. This puts pressure on the US,

who has been forced to reach some agreements [with us] during the talk. The US has consented that India may investigate and aid in the return of Chinese nationals. This is a sign that the US is preparing to sign an agreement with us. If the US walks one step further, agreeing to provide a complete list of Chinese nationals in the US and agrees that India looks after Chinese nationals in the US, it is equal to the recognition of the People's Republic of China. This is unlikely at present. In addition to offering an explanation to our proposal IV, as to proposal II, the US side also repeatedly claims to have lifted restrictions on the return of Chinese nationals, which applies to Qian Xuesen. Regarding proposal III, the US side also re-supplied a list of seventy-six Chinese students. Thus, we have nearly achieved our goals regarding our four proposals. Yesterday, we proposed to delay the fifth meeting for a day. This is because we need sufficient time in order to telegraph to you the text of the speech. [We hope] that an agreement will be reached on Agenda I on 11 August.

The following items should be included in a possible agreement of 11 August.

1. Both sides declare that nationals residing in the other's countries, who desire to return, are entitled to depart [for their respective country] unless they have unfinished civil or criminal cases.

2. To implement the aforementioned agreement, China entrusts India and the US entrusts the UK to aid their nationals in the other country on the issue of returning to their respective countries. The countries thus entrusted shall perform the following duties:

(a) Upon the request of a civilian of one side residing in the other's country who desires to return or upon the request of his government made on his behalf, the entrusted country shall make representations with the government of the country in which the civilian is residing with a view to settling his difficulty in departure;

(b) In the event of a civilian of one side residing in the other who desires to return and who is being prevented from doing so, the entrusted country shall, upon his personal request or the request on his behalf by his government, conduct investigations and make representations with the government of the country in which the civilian concerned is residing, in accordance with the findings of the investigation with a view of arriving at a settlement;

(c) In the event that a civilian of one side residing in the other desires to return and finds difficulty in paying for the return journey, the entrusted country shall render him assistance on behalf of his government.

3. Upon accepting the trusteeship described above by India and the UK in response to the requests of China and the US, respectively, both sides shall give wide publicity to the details of this agreement by means of all available news media. India

and the UK may also give similar publicity, which they consider appropriate on the US and China, respectively (This doesn't exclude the publication of the complete text after today's meeting).

We'll send you the formal text of this agreement in another telegram.

Before proposing this draft agreement on 11 August, [you should] make a speech, pointing out that the US has repeatedly promised the elimination of restrictions in accordance with our second proposal. The US also re-supplied a list of seventy-six Chinese students in accordance with our third proposal. We are satisfied with the arrangements. We have provided a complete list of all US nationals in China. But the US has not provided a list of all Chinese nationals in accordance with our first proposal. We express regret over that matter and declare to reserve our right to put forward this demand in the future (we would raise this matter again if the US bothers us on Agenda II issues).

We should also point out that we are not satisfied with the US excuse of prolonged deliberation of our fourth proposal. But for the purpose of reaching an agreement on Agenda I, on the whole, we agree to US arrangements. We propose this draft agreement based on the positions of both sides presented in previous talks. At the end of your speech, you may say that once the draft agreement is reached, we should notify the US side of our decision on those US nationals who have applied to leave China.

We will send to you the text of the speech in another telegram.

Should the other party agree basically to our proposed draft agreement (You can make a decision without further instructions from the FM if the other party only asks for cosmetic revisions). At that point, you can notify the other party that you have received orders to inform the US side that nine US nationals who applied for departure have been approved to leave. If the other party delays in responding to our draft agreement, then don't notify them of the granting of departure for nine US nationals (Don't announce the three convicted US nationals mentioned in the previous plan and the one expelled from China for now).

It is likely that the US side might propose a name list of about 470 American POWs and ask us to find out their whereabouts. We should reject such a name list. You may propose that if the other party agrees to transmit our demand to the US government and provide us with a complete list of Chinese nationals in the United States, we will accept a list of American POWs and transmit it to the Korean Military Ceasefire Commission. Otherwise, [you should] decline to accept it.

Foreign Ministry  
10 August 1955

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## **Document No. 20**

### **Cable from the Chinese Foreign Ministry to Wang Bingnan, "Possible Attitudes of the Other Party at the Sixth Meeting," 13 August 1955**

*[Source: PRC FMA 111-00016-16, 66-67. Translated by Yafeng Xia.*

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110861.>]

[To] Ambassador Wang Bingnan:

It is likely that after our first speech (the text of the speech has been sent), the other party might still insist on its position from the fifth meeting; that is, asking us to release its nationals. He will not express his view if we do not do as requested. Under such circumstances, we must point out we have made an effort. The other party's position will not help and we will ask him to consider our way. The other possibility is that the other party says that the draft agreement is okay but needs to get our notice [of releasing American nationals] before entering into concrete discussion with us. At this point, we have to insist on our position and urge the other side to reconsider. Under these two circumstances, we should not relent, and it is impossible to reach an agreement. There is a third possibility, that is, if the other side indicates a willingness to accept our draft agreement or proposes cosmetic revisions. Under such circumstances, we should inform the other party that the Chinese government has completed its review of the following cases:

[...]

Foreign Ministry  
1:00 a.m., 13 August 1955

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## **Document No. 21**

### **Cable from the Chinese Foreign Ministry to Wang Bingnan, "Instructions and Text of Speeches at the Seventh Meeting," 15 August 1955**

*[Source: PRC FMA 111-00017-04, 14-15. Translated by Yafeng Xia.*

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110864.>]

[To] Ambassador Wang Bingnan:

We have learned about the sixth meeting and the speeches of the other party.



1. In accordance with our observation of the other party at the sixth meeting, he may not insist that we release American nationals before entering into a discussion on the draft agreement at the seventh meeting. But on the other hand, if the other side could get our notification of releasing its nationals, the other side won't reach an agreement with us on a draft agreement. At the seventh meeting, the other side may follow our example from the sixth meeting, placing nationals in both countries on the same footing. Then, the US side may propose its revision to the draft agreement and enter into concrete discussions. For the seventh meeting, we should try to discuss the draft agreement and reach an agreement (even if it is only tentative).

You may ask the other side to speak first at the seventh meeting. It seems that the revised draft of the other party should include the following three points: (a) the issue of civil and criminal cases; (b) the issue of representation [by a third government]; (c) the issue of publication of the draft simultaneously or separately. Regarding these three issues, we must stick to our original position ... Eventually we may compromise on the second and the third issues in exchange for the other side's concession on the first issue. We cannot make concessions on civil cases. We may agree to delete the sentence regarding "representation by the other government." We must fight for the publication of the draft agreement simultaneously. We may agree to the publication separately but should not relent too early. We should not relent if an accord could not be reached on an agreed announcement, even at the seventh meeting.

2. Given the intense counterpropaganda in the US over the issue of the eleven released US personnel, you should warn the US side that if they want to stir up trouble over this issue, we have more grievances over the issue of the POWs. We hope that they will behave themselves.

3. According to Reuters at Geneva, we will propose two issues under Agenda II, which we have internally decided but have not officially announced. Please investigate who leaked the information and whether it was from our side, from Menon, or just pure speculation. In short, you should be on the alert and maintain secrecy.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
15 August 1955

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## **Document No. 22**

### **Cable from the Chinese Foreign Ministry to Wang Bingnan, "Instructions a for the Eighth Meeting," 18 August 1955**

*[Source: PRC FMA 111-00017-12, 48-49. Translated by Yafeng Xia.*

*[https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110867.](https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110867)]*

[To] Ambassador Wang Bingnan:

We have received your report about the seventh meeting, the speech of the other side and the text of the agreed announcement.

1. From the information of the seventh meeting, it is possible to reach an accord on the “Agreed Announcement” expediently. At the eighth meeting, we should speak first, stating our position on the two issues of civil and criminal cases and representation by the other government. You should ask to put your speech on record and state that you will present our amendment on the condition that the other side accepts our two declarations. If the other side doesn’t agree with our position, we should do all we can because we have sufficient reasons. If the other side only asks for cosmetic changes in the wording of the text, you may agree. But don’t take hasty action. Meanwhile, when proposing an amendment, you should translate the two declarations (into English) and print them out for the other side. In the translation, try your best to use the words and sentences of the other side. If the other side accepts our two declarations in the translated version, then it shows that the other side has agreed to our declarations and record. If the other side returns or refuses to accept our declarations, we must not give in.

2. It is likely to reach an accord on the basis of our amendment. If an accord could be reached, we may take the initiative to announce the release of US nationals (see in another telegram). Otherwise, wait until the next meeting.

3. In view of the other party’s mentioning that Premier Zhou [Enlai] said it was easy to settle the issue of Chinese nationals in the US at the National People’s Congress, we should point out that it would also be easy to reasonably resolve the issue of Chinese nationals in the United States. On the other hand, it is absolutely impossible to get it done if [the US] wants to violate our sovereignty.

Foreign Ministry  
2:30 a.m., 18 August 1955

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## **Document No. 23**

### **Premier Zhou Enlai’s Report to the Central Committee on the Possibility of Reaching an Accord on an Agreed Announcement regarding the Issue of Chinese and American Nationals, 18 August 1955**

*[Source: PRC FMA 111-00017-15, 61-62. Translated by Yafeng Xia.*

*[https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110869.](https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110869)]*

[To] the Chairman [Mao Zedong] and the Central Committee:

At the seventh Sino-American talk, the US side proposed a revised version, which consents to the format of an agreed announcement, but leaves out the issue of nationals with unfinished civil and criminal cases and the representation of civilians [by a third party]. In his speech, the US representative repeatedly claimed that the revised version is reciprocally favorable to both sides. It doesn't violate our sovereignty or right to handle this issue. Neither does it attempt to force upon us this measure or that action, nor does it suggest that the cases of US nationals should be resolved above Chinese law. According to the US amendment and speeches, the US side is going to make concessions. The US proposed amendment is basically in our favor. It, in fact, admits our legal jurisdiction over Chinese nationals in the US. Its publication would deal a severe blow to Jiang Jieshi's bandit clique. Thus, we plan to make more modifications to the US proposed amendment and try our best to reach an agreement.

Regarding the revised US agreement, our main modification is to delete the sentence, "there are no nationals being prevented from leaving," which is not to our advantage, and to replace it with "has already adopted, and will continue to adopt suitable measures" in order for nationals in the other country, who are willing to return, "to assert their right to return [to their country of origin]." In addition, in the light of some favorable remarks from the US representative at the seventh meeting, we will make two declarations on the two issues of civil and criminal cases and representation by the third party. We want US consent to put them on record. We will propose our amendment on this condition. If an accord could be reached on the basis of our amendment, it is in conformity with the Central Committee's approved principle.

[We] have notified comrade [Wang] Bingnan in accordance with the aforementioned position. Hereby is the report.

Attached are instructions, the text of speech and draft agreed announcement of Chinese and American ambassadors.

Zhou Enlai  
18 August 1955

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## **Document No. 24**

### **Cable from the Chinese Foreign Ministry to Wang Bingnan, "Instructions for the Ninth Meeting," 19 August 1955**

*[Source: PRC FMA 111-00017-19, 75-76. Translated by Yafeng Xia.*

*[https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110209.](https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110209)]*

Top Secret

[To] Ambassador Wang Bingnan:

[We] have received your report on the 8th meeting and the speech of the other party.

1. [We] agree with your assessment in general. The objective, which the other side attempts to achieve on Agenda I, is that we promise to release all American nationals in China. Only with the evolution of the talks did [the US] propose divergent formulations. Regarding the first item in the agreed announcement, we have made our greatest efforts and cannot make further concessions. Meanwhile, in view of the misperception of the other side that we are eager to reach an accord, we should be resolute at the ninth meeting and vigorously criticize various arguments from the other side. At the ninth meeting, let the other side speak first. If the other party declines to talk first then we will speak first. We will send you the text of the speech soon. If the other side repeats what he said at the eighth meeting, we should refuse to yield an inch and struggle against him.

2. To coordinate with your struggle at the meeting, Xinhua News Agency has started to publish articles on how our students were prevented from leaving the US and [were] persecuted. We are going to strike back against the US counter-propaganda on the eleven released convicted US nationals. We will send these materials to you for your reference once they are published.

3. As to making the talk public, it is not suitable to raise this issue. Please wait and see.

Foreign Ministry  
24:00, 19 August [1955]

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## **Document No. 25**

### **Cable from Wang Bingnan, "Request for Instructions on the American Invitation to Ambassador Wang to Have a Meal on Monday," 20 August 1955**

*[Source: PRC FMA 111-00068-01, 1. Translated by Yafeng Xia.*

*<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110212.>*

Top Secret

[To the] Foreign Ministry:

At the 8th Meeting, the other side seems to understand:

- 1) We could make no more concession regarding the agreement;
- 2) [We'll] release the US nationals after an agreement is reached;

3) It is impossible for us to release all of the American nationals. The other party's attitude was more flexible at the ninth meeting today. He wanted to confirm some issues, such as a specific period of time required to review the remaining cases of American nationals. After the meeting, the US representative invited me for a meal at his villa on the outskirts [of Geneva] so that we could exchange ideas more freely. To avoid journalist inquiries, only one interpreter from each side will be in [our] company. I told him that I would respond formally tomorrow at 8:00 a.m. (on the 21st). It seems that the other side has many difficulties and wants to socialize with me. How should I respond? Please give instructions immediately.

I will send a separate report on the eighth meeting.

Wang Bingnan  
12:00 noon, 20 August [1955]

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## Document No. 26

### Cable from the Chinese Foreign Ministry to Wang Bingnan, "Agree for Wang to Accept the Invite from Johnson," 21 August 1955

[Source: PRC FMA 111-00068-01, 2. Translated by Yafeng Xia.  
[https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110213.](https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110213)]

Secret

[To] Ambassador Wang [Bingnan]:

Your telegram dated 12:00 noon on 20 August has been received.

1) You may consent to US side's invitation for a meal. We will cable you points for [your] attention after receiving and studying your report on the ninth meeting.

2) In your telegram, you have not clearly indicated whether the time of the meal is at noon or in the evening. Please inform us by cable immediately.

Foreign Ministry  
2:00 a.m., 21 August 1955

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## **Document No. 27**

### **Cable from Wang Bingnan, "Potential Topics at the Private Dinner with Johnson," 20 August 1955**

*[Source: PRC FMA 111-00068-01, 4. Translated by Yafeng Xia.*

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110214.>]

[To the] Foreign Ministry:

The US representative has invited me for dinner. The anticipated topics [of discussion] may include the following:

- 1) To explain the unfavorable US situation and to express wishes to improve Sino-American relations; the US attempt to break a deadlock;
- 2) To attempt to use soft approaches to achieve the goal of getting US nationals released; to continue to probe our bottom line on the release of US nationals;
- 3) To feel out our attitude toward the improvement of Sino-American relations;
- 4) To probe our opinions regarding Agenda II;

Are they fitting? Please instruct.

Wang Bingnan  
10:45 p.m., 20 August [1955]

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## **Document No. 28**

### **Cable from the Chinese Foreign Ministry, "America's Probing of Us and Our Talking Points," 21 August 1955**

*[Source: PRC FMA 111-00017-24, 108-112. Translated by Yafeng Xia.*

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110215.>]

[To] Ambassador Wang [Bingnan]:

Your report on the ninth meeting, the speech of the US side, and your telegram dated 10:45 p.m., 20 August [1955], have all been received.

1. The US side made several attempts to probe our intentions at the ninth talk and proposed a private meeting. Its purpose is to sound us out: How many people can we release now and when can we release all US nationals? The US side has made many

attempts to ask us to release more and earlier. In a private meeting, the US representative might ask us to propose a secret deadline for reviewing [the cases of] all US nationals. As for Agenda II and general issues in Sino-American relations, the US side might raise them in passing during the private meeting.

2. We could not make any further concessions on the issue of US nationals. Thus, in the private meeting you may speak softly but remain firm in your position. If the US side uses a threatening tone, you should refute his argument. You should take the initiative to point out that Chinese nationals still experience restrictions when returning to their country of origin and the Jiang Jieshi clique is flagrantly threatening our students. We are unsatisfied with this situation.

3. As to possible issues which might come up during the meeting, you may follow these main points:

(1) Regarding the number of people: You may tell the other party that all US nationals without unfinished cases can leave. We are reviewing all US nationals with unfinished civil and criminal cases. After we complete a review, the person at issue may leave. After the two sides reach an accord on the agreed announcement, we will be able to inform the US side of the results of the cases reviewed. We expect a large number.

(2) Regarding time: You should tell the US side that it is impossible to set a time limit in advance. The cases of US nationals have been reviewed on a case by case basis. We have been reviewing these cases in a timely fashion, but it depends on the conduct of each convict and the improvement in Sino-American relations. Those US nationals with criminal cases may be released before their sentences expire if they behave well. We believe that the release of some US convicts will have a positive effect on others, who would follow suit in order to be freed earlier. With the implementation of the third-party representation and the improvement in Sino-American relations, we believe it would produce more favorable results regarding this issue. (Should the US side ask that since 38 US nationals left China for the US in the past year after their cases were reviewed, does that mean that the remaining forty-one US nationals would be able to leave in less than a year? You may tell him that the situations in two time periods are not comparable should the relationship between the two countries improve).

(3) The issue of improvement of relations between the two countries: At the last meeting, the US side claimed that there was nothing more favorable for the improvement of relations between the two countries than releasing all US nationals. That is the main reason the US to agree to the talks. Regarding this, we must emphasize the importance of mutual efforts for improving relations between the two countries. To resolve the issue of the return of Chinese nationals is as important as that of US nationals. The convening of the Sino-American talks demonstrates improvement in relations between the two countries. But it is also important to see the evolution of the talks and the further development and implementation of an agreed announcement.

Should the US side propose general issues in improving relations between the two countries, we must stress the importance of mutual efforts for improving relations. [We] may indicate that the Chinese side is willing to make its effort.

(4) Regarding the formulations of the agreed announcement: It is unlikely that the other party would propose this in a private meeting. Should he raise the matter, we may say that we have taken into consideration the other side's position in proposing the first item in our amendment. Both sides could interpret this based on their own stands. If necessary, you may say we are not insisting on inserting the wording, "and declare that it has adopted, and continue to adopt appropriate measures." It means that the first item in our amendment is categorical. If the other side doesn't ask, don't raise this matter prematurely. Don't agree to any additions or revisions.

(5) Should the US side raise the issue of adjourning the talks, as advocated by some in the United States, we must indicate that the US side could decide on its own whether it wants to suspend the talks or not. But we believe that [adjourning] would not aid in resolving issues and improving relations between the two sides. Should the US side pose the issue of US domestic media accusing us of holding US nationals as hostages, we should reiterate our previous position on this issue. Additionally, we should point out that it is true that some in the US are unwilling to see the relaxation of international tension and the improvement of Sino-American relations. It is obvious that these people fabricate the so-called hostage accusation. The Chinese side has never proposed to use US nationals in China for an exchange purpose. The hostage accusation is groundless. On the contrary, the Chinese people are indignant of the plight of Chinese nationals in the United States. We ask the other side to give due attention to the Chinese media.

(6) On the issue of Chinese nationals in the US: Recently, US propaganda has emphasized that only about forty Chinese nationals want to leave [for China] and the US has already lifted all restrictions. The US side has no integrated file of Chinese nationals and knows very little about their condition. At the talks, the US asked us to present concrete cases of Chinese nationals being prevented from leaving so as to shirk its responsibility. Should the US side continue with this kind of argument, we must point out that Chinese nationals are still experiencing difficulties in leaving the US and are being threatened by the Jiang Jieshi clique. Additionally, we should ask how the US, without an integrated file, could possibly know that there are only forty Chinese nationals who wish to return. These Chinese nationals are in the US and the US side must provide us with their documents.

(7) Should the US side probe our opinions on Agenda II, we should say, after entering Agenda II, all parties have the right to propose issues for discussion. This would be conducive to the free exchange of ideas. We believe that the discussion on Agenda II will further contribute to the improvement of relations between the two countries.



4. In order to better prepare for the tenth talk, you should ask the other side to switch the next meeting from the initially agreed date of 22 August to the 23rd.

Foreign Ministry  
6:00 p.m., 21 August [1955]

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## Document No. 29

### Cable from the Chinese Foreign Ministry, "Analysis of the Private Dinner and the 10th Meeting and Instructions for the 11th Meeting of the Sino-US Ambassadorial Talks," 24 August 1955

[Source: PRC FMA 111-00068-03, 8-13. Translated by Yafeng Xia.

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110218.>]

Secret

[To] Ambassador Wang Bingnan:

We have received the two telegrams on the private meeting and the tenth talk on 23 August.

Regarding the other side's attempt to force us to set a time limit for releasing US nationals, we cannot make any concessions. But in the agreed announcement, we can consent to declare that we have adopted and will further adopt appropriate measures so that American nationals in China can exercise their right to return as soon as possible. We must reiterate that we have tried our best.

At the eleventh meeting, we should first propose our modified agreed announcement and offer the following explanations:

1) Regarding the first sentence in the agreed announcement, we should indicate that we have adopted the formulation in the first US suggestion. So the US should be able to accept it.

2) Regarding the first item in what we have informed the US side, we should indicate that we have taken into consideration US opinion and made the utmost effort and agreed to add the wording of "*jinsu* [as soon as possible]." If the US side insists on the wording of "*xunsu* [expeditiously]," claiming that it is from our side, we should point out that when we utilize the word "*xunsu*," we indicate that the actual time depends on the conduct of the individual convict and the improvement of Sino-American relations. In this revised agreement, we have not raised these conditions, so it is suitable to use the wording "*xunsu*." If the US side again raises the issue of setting a time limit, we

should also firmly state that it is impossible. The Chinese government will review cases of American nationals as soon as possible. Our word counts, but we cannot set a time limit in advance.

3) As for the first item in the US notification to us, in view of the different situation of the nationals from both sides, we may agree to use different formulations in notification to the other side. But in the US formulation, the wording “will further adopt appropriate measures” must be added. Otherwise, it seems that we are already satisfied with what the US has done. In addition, our explanation should indicate that we have already pointed out that Chinese nationals are still being prevented from leaving the United States. We believe that the US government should continue to adopt measures so that they can actually return expeditiously.

4) Regarding the third-country representation, we must indicate that both China and the US could not authorize but only entrust a third country. In addition, the Indian government should be entrusted by the Chinese government, not authorized by the US government, to assist in the return of Chinese nationals. Similarly, the United Kingdom should be entrusted by the US government, not authorized by the Chinese government, to assist in the return of American nationals. So, in the document, it is not appropriate to use the wording “authorizing a third party;” rather, the wording is “a third country being entrusted.”

Foreign Ministry  
9:00 p.m., 24 August 1955

Attachment: Agreed Announcement

[...]

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### **Document No. 30**

#### **Cable from Wang Bingnan, “Opinions on the American Proposal to Postpone the 12th Meeting of the Talks,” 26 August 1955**

*[Source: PRC FMA 111-00018-03, 11-12. Translated by Yafeng Xia.*

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110221.>]

[To the] Foreign Ministry:

This morning, the US side requested to postpone the twelfth meeting from the 27th to the 31st [of August], putting off two regular meetings. It is likely that the US side has not reached its goal on the issue of setting a time limit after the private talk and the tenth and eleventh meetings. It thus needs further consideration of the issue before making a decision. Prior to the twelfth meeting, the US side might take the following

actions: 1) Attempt to persuade us through a third party. 2) Hope that we would study Dulles' speech from today, which might touch on the Sino-American talks. 3) There is no consensus on the US side on the issue. Thus, it needs more time to adjust and consider it for a final decision. It is unlikely that the US side would bargain again at the twelfth meeting. The positive outcome is to reach an agreement so as to move on to the second agenda. The negative outcome is to propose a recess, indicating an unwillingness to make further concessions. [The US side wants to indicate] that if the issue of American nationals is not satisfied, it would not be beneficial to the discussion of Agenda II. Because the disarmament conference and the foreign ministers' conference are forthcoming, it is unlikely that the Sino-American talks would be further put off. In sum, after the eleventh talk, we are very familiar with the issues regarding Agenda I. It is time to make a final decision. Since I am not in full grasp of the documents, I proposed the above opinions. Are they fitting? Please give instructions.

Wang Bingnan  
10:30 a.m., 26 August [1955]

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### **Document No. 31**

#### **Cable from the Chinese Foreign Ministry, "Agree to the Postponement of the 12th Meeting of the Sino-US Talks to the 31st of August," 26 August 1955**

[Source: PRC FMA 111-00068-04, 18. Translated by Yafeng Xia

[https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110222.](https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110222)]

[To] Ambassador Wang Bingnan:

[We have] already telephoned to inform [you] our approval of postponing the twelfth meeting to 31 August (on Wednesday). After receiving this telegram, you should immediately inform [U. Alexis] Johnson by phone to make an appointment for him to come to your place for dinner on Sunday (28 August). The participants will be the same as the last time when he invited you. Please keep it a secret and select an inconspicuous place for dinner. [We will] send you another telegram on the talking points for the dinner.

Foreign Ministry  
6:30 p.m. 26 August 1955

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### **Document No. 32**

#### **Cable from the Chinese Foreign Ministry, "Instructions for Ambassador Wang," 28 August 1955**

[Source: PRC FMA 111-00018-04, 17-21. Translated by Yafeng Xia.  
[https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110223.](https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110223)]

Secret

[To] Ambassador Wang Bingnan:

Your telegram dated 10:30 a.m., 26 August [1955], was received.

1. Since our stand at the talks is very clear, the US side indeed needs time to rethink its tactics. It also attempts to use this recess to put pressure on us. When the talks are resumed, the US has four options: to break the talks; to reach an agreement on Agenda I; to insist on setting a time limit for releasing US nationals in order to put pressure on us; to continue to bargain in order to procrastinate. In accordance with the current situation, it is very likely that the US side would pressure us or put off the talks.

2. Given the aforementioned assessment, we should stick to our position. We should also take the initiative to move the talks forward. We will invalidate US pressure and liquidate its excuses for putting off the talks. Should the US side insist on doing so, we will place them in an unfavorable and passive position. We will absolutely make no concessions on the issue of a time limit. For US nationals who applied to leave a long time ago and with no unfinished cases, we should take the initiative to grant them exit permits so as to move the talks forward.

3. At dinner with Johnson on 28 August, we should take the initiative to raise the following points:

1) Regarding the return of civilians: Prior to the first talk, we released eleven US Air Force personnel before their sentences expired. At the outset of the talk, we informed the other side of our policy toward US nationals in China. All US nationals who apply to leave may leave at any time if there is no unfinished case. For those US nationals with civil and criminal cases, the Chinese government is reviewing their cases one by one and is lenient in treatment. We have also indicated that the Chinese government is adopting measures so that US nationals in China could exercise their right to return as soon as possible. So we believe there is absolutely no reason not to reach an agreement on the return of civilians of both countries.

2) According to the name list given to us from the US side, there are twelve American nationals in China who applied to leave. If they have applied and have no unfinished cases, they could leave China.

3) Those US nationals in China who have committed criminal offenses, the Chinese government will review their cases one by one, considering lenient treatment. Our word counts. We have stated that we will notify the results of cases reviewed once

an agreed announcement is reached. We will review other cases as soon as possible. These will depend on reaching an agreement. We absolutely cannot set a time limit for releasing them because it is incompatible with our sovereignty and legal procedures. If an agreement is reached between the two sides, after representation is made by a third country, they will soon get lenient treatment in accordance with their personal conduct and the improvement in Sino-American relations. If the two sides cannot reach an agreement, it will be very difficult to release them before their sentences expire.

4) Regarding the Chinese in the US: We have made many concessions and many of our requests have not been honored. We have not even got a sum total, a list of names and the state of affairs [of Chinese nationals in the US]. We have not been notified of the circumstances of those Chinese who have been detained or imprisoned. We have not received a list of those Chinese who applied to return long ago, but have been prevented from leaving. Our request for third-party representation has not been fully satisfied. We have consented to the format of an agreed announcement ... There are many Chinese in the United States. Whether they can return without obstruction depends on the implementation of the agreed announcement and the improvement of relations between our two countries. Nonetheless, we place hopes on the US declarations and indications at the talks and are willing to reach an agreement. We will work to improve relations between the two sides. We cannot be satisfied with the situation that the two sides have not reached an agreement.

5) At the invited meal, Johnson said that the US wants to improve relations with China and hopes to have positive results. We welcome this attitude. Our objective in this talk is to reach an agreement and to improve relations. We think if both sides cherish the same idea and accept the principle of consultation and reconciliation, an agreement could be reached at the Sino-American talks. If the talks are used as a propaganda tool, if one side insists on an unwarranted demand, then this will negate the implications of the talks. This will not be conducive to the improvement of Sino-American relations and will work to prevent a better relationship.

4. Regarding possible questions from the US side during the conversation, please respond to them in accordance with the following outline:

1) Should the US side ask about whether the twelve American nationals who applied to leave have been approved [to do so], they could leave now, or whether we could announce ahead of schedule, we should tell him that we have no comment at this time.

2) Should the US side insist on setting a time limit for releasing US nationals, we must tell him that this is absolutely impossible. If the US side insists on such a demand, it is impossible to reach an agreement. We should also point out that if we also insist on such unwarrantable requests, like the US side, it is impossible to reach an accord. But we have not done so.

3) Should the US side threaten us with a recess or suspension of the talks, we should refute him resolutely. We should also point out, if the US side attempts to put pressure on us by postponing the twelfth talk to 31 August, then we can tell him in advance that it won't work.

Foreign Ministry  
28 August 1955

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### **Document No. 33**

#### **Cable from the Chinese Foreign Ministry, "Instructions for the 12th Meeting of the Sino-US Ambassadorial Talks," 30 August 1955**

*[Source: PRC FMA 111-00018-06, 25-26. Translated by Yafeng Xia.*

*[https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110224.](https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110224)]*

Secret

[To] Ambassador Wang Bingnan:

We have received your two telegrams dated 29 August [1955].

1. From your conversation with Johnson on 28 August, the US side could not find an excuse to break the talks or put pressure on us. It is likely that the US side could agree to our proposal on reaching an agreement on Agenda I. But it is still possible that the US side may create some unjustifiable pretext to put off the talks.

2. Because of the aforementioned situation, we should take the offensive, making it impossible for the other side to put off the talks or putting the other side in a very unfavorable and passive situation for delaying the talks. It is utterly absurd to say that Sino-American relations will not improve unless we set free all US nationals and that we detain US nationals as hostages. We should firmly refute these subterfuges at the twelfth talk.

3. At the twelfth talk, our side should speak first. If the US side is conciliatory, we may state that we have made our position very clear and hope both sides rethink it. If the US side is not conciliatory, then we should take the initiative to postpone the talks to 3 September, asking the other side to reconsider. If the US side proposes a longer recess, we can agree. If the US side attempts to threaten us, we must resolutely refute him, and then we will consent to adjourn the talk.

4. If the US side is conciliatory at the twelfth talk, we plan to notify the other side of the status of US nationals who have applied to leave [China]. As to the wording of the agreed announcement, we may agree to replace “has adopted and will further adopt” with “is adopting”. If the US side agrees to this modification, we will agree to translate “jinsu” into “expeditiously,” but with no change in Chinese wording. We will also agree to eliminate the terminology of “the People’s Republic of China” and “the United States of America” at the beginning of the paragraph on the third-party representation.

The Foreign Ministry  
8:00 p.m., 30 August 1955

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### **Document No. 34**

#### **Cable from the Chinese Foreign Ministry, “Instructions for the 13th Meeting of the Sino-US Ambassadorial Talks,” 5 September 1955**

*[Source: PRC FMA 111-00018-09, 39-41. Translated by Yafeng Xia.*

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110227.>]

Secret

1. The US consented to the wording in the agreed announcement at the twelfth talk, but continues to pester us with the issue of a time limit and suggests a recess of six days. Meanwhile, at the news conference on 30 August, [John Foster] Dulles said that they require patience for the Sino-American talks and they will end up with some positive results eventually. From the aforementioned situation, it is still possible for the US side to procrastinate the talks, although the US representative showed signs of conciliation and relaxation. Our policy is the same as the previous one: to stick to principles and eliminate the other’s excuse for delaying the talks, win over an agreement and prepare for the other side’s dilatory tactics.

2. At the thirteenth talk, we should take the initiative to notify the other side of the situation of those US nationals who have applied to leave [China]. In this way, if the other side is ready to reach an agreement, it will give the other side a chance to back down with good grace. If the other side intentionally procrastinates in the talks, it will leave us in a favorable position.

3. After notifying the other side of the situation of US nationals, we should take the initiative to mention the text of the agreed announcement, finalizing the wording. We suggest that both sides reach an accord on the return of civilians.

[...]

4. Should the US side continue to nag at us with the issue of a time limit, we should refute it based on the so-called “the issue of trust” as proposed by the other side at the last meeting. We may indicate, although the actual situation of Chinese nationals in the US conflicts with what the other side has stated, we still believe in what the other side said at the talks and are prepared to reach an accord. We have said on many occasions that we give convicted US nationals lenient treatment. But the other side insists that we set a time limit for releasing US nationals. This is not only an issue of trust toward us but also a violation of our sovereignty. This demand will absolutely not be satisfied because it is unjustifiable.

5. If the US side says an accord has been reached on the text of the agreed announcement and asks our side to inform him of the results of the reviewed cases of US nationals, we should ask if the other side completely agrees to the text without any reservation. If the other side continues to ask us to release US nationals, we should point out that both sides have not reached an accord on the essence of the agreement. If the other side says an agreement has been reached without reservation, then we could inform the other side that we will inform him of the results of those US nationals whose cases have been reviewed.

6. If the US side again proposes to put off the talks for six days, we can agree. If the US side doesn't touch on that, we can suggest 10 September for the next meeting.

Foreign Ministry  
4:30 p.m., 5 September 1955

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### **Document No. 35**

#### **Cable from the Chinese Foreign Ministry, “Instructions for the 14th Meeting of the Sino-US Ambassadorial Talks,” 9 September 1955**

*[Source: PRC FMA 111-00019-01, 5-8. Translated by Yafeng Xia*  
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110232.>]

Top Secret

[To] Ambassador Wang Bingnan,

1. Your telegram dated 9:30 a.m., 8 September [1955], was received. After agreeing to the wording of the agreed announcement at the twelfth talk, the US side handed in the written agreement, in which the words “now” and “any such incident” were added. When accepting it, you did not carefully examine it and failed to notice [these changes] afterwards. Neither did you mention this in your report, nor did you



telegram back the US amendment. This is negligence and a mistake. You are not allowed to commit this error in the future.

2. Based on all circumstances, it is possible that an accord could be reached on the return of civilians at the fourteenth talk. At the next meeting, we should first of all try to finalize the text of the agreed announcement. Because of the different nature of nationals of both countries, it is to our advantage to use different wordings for the notification to the other side ...

3. After finalizing the text of the agreed announcement, we should take initiatives to suggest that both sides promulgate the agreed announcement simultaneously at 15:00 p.m. Geneva time (11:00 p.m. Beijing time, 24 September). You can also state that we will notify the US side of the results of the remaining US cases reviewed...If an accord could be reached, Beijing will promulgate the agreed announcement and announce the remaining US cases at an agreed time. We should also distribute the text of the agreed announcement to journalists at Geneva. But do not distribute notification of the results of the US cases.

4. Regarding the text of the agreed announcement, we should take the initiative to suggest that both sides proofread and exchange the text. But do not ask the other side to sign. We may give the text in Chinese to the other side, and ask the other side to give us the text in English. If the text is not ready at the talk, you may request a one-hour recess for proofreading and exchanging the text. You should carefully proofread the text in English submitted by the other party to guarantee that it is identical to our text in Chinese. You must know that the US side is cunning in these details and treat it with caution. Don't be neglectful and careless.

5. After confirming that the other side has given up on its request on the issue of the time limit and consented to the condition for the promulgation of the agreed announcement, you may notify the results of the US cases reviewed: three convicted US nationals will be released before their sentences expire and seven will be deported.

6. [...]

7. If the US side raises the issue of the name list of US POWs from the Korean War and asks us to find out their whereabouts, you should deal with this according to the telegram to you dated 10 August 1955. If the US side refuses to submit a complete list of Chinese nationals in the US, we absolutely cannot accept it nor promise to transmit it to the Korean Military Armistice Commission.

8. Whether or not an accord can be reached on 10 September, we should take initiatives to suggest the next talk be on 14 September. We may also consent to a longer recess.

Foreign Ministry  
10:00 p.m., 9 September 1955

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