

Peking story (American prisoners in China) - correspondence, letters and ca...

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Peking story

31 May 1955

Aid Memoire (conc. talks with Arthur Call and Krishna Menon)

31 May 1955

AIDE MEMOIRE

Mr. Arthur LALL saw me today at his own request. He said that he wanted to congratulate us, which made me reply that I did not see any strong reason for that, but that I was glad to see him as there were a couple of points I wanted to talk over with him. I had observed that the legal analysis which had been sent to Mr. Menon had never provoked an acknowledgment of receipt, much less any reply or any questions. I had further observed that I never got any reaction to my message to Mr. Nehru in Bandoeng, and I had finally observed that Mr. Krishna Menon had in no way reported to the United Nations on the prisoner matter which he knew to be a United Nations concern. This situation worried me as it was symptomatic of a lack of coordination and cooperation which might lead to dangerous complications. I did not know how much Mr. Krishna Menon knew about passed developments, but I feared that, for example, he was unacquainted with the situation concerning the four long before he went to Peking. (I then recapitulated the main parts of the development in the case of the four).

Mr. Lall said that we was aware of the shortcomings which I had criticized and he was sorry for them. He hoped, however, that no harm had been done. He further hoped that I did not take sloppy newspaper statements at their face value: "of course Mr.

Krishna Menon, who knows that Mr. Chou En-lai is on record as having been prepared to release the prisoners already in January, has never said that the four were released at his request".

I said that I was not very interested either in the history or in what Mr. Menon had said or been understood to say, but in the future. Whatever Mr. Menon's theories were, I would have to pursue my own efforts to get the eleven out. I had a sufficient basis on which to act - which had been provided by Mr. Chou En-lai - but I felt that it would be imprudent to continue the previous lack of coordination and for that reason I would ask for a report from Mr. Menon on the specific points on which he based his views concerning the case of the eleven. I was further rather anxious that the United Nations should not be left out of the picture by Mr. Menon. To do so could not be in India's interest.

Mr. Lall replied that he was agreed on both points. However, they had no report here on Mr. Menon's talks. He understood Mr. Menon to feel that once a negotiation was established between the United States and China the eleven would be freed automatically. For that reason Mr. Menon was not likely to work for the eleven but for the more general issue. To this I replied that this was just the difference between Mr. Menon's approach and mine. I had never for a moment doubted that the eleven would be released in a situation of general appeasement, but the problem was to get them out independently of such a situation which, quite frankly, would make them piece of the bargain.

Mr. Lall said that Mr. Menon on his return to America intended to spend up to one month in Washington. I repeated that that might be all right but that I felt bound to act before he was likely to arrive and for that reason must repeat my demand for whatever specific information Mr. Menon could give us.

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AIDE MEMOIRE

1) Asked about the availability of Ambassador Dayal, Mr. Nehru refused to put him at our disposal because of India's "special attitude" to the United Nations' efforts. His legal experts told him that it was a question of 50/50 whether the Americans or the Chinese were right.

2) Mr. Menon received professor Waldock's legal analysis. He never showed it to Mr. Lall who had asked for similar information for Mr. Nehru, nor did he ever even acknowledge receipt.

3) Before Bandoeng I asked Mr. Lall to forward a message to Mr. Nehru asking him to bring up the flier issue with Mr. Chou En-lai. Mr. Nehru did receive the message and he talked over the issue with Mr. Chou En-lai. He got, according to Mr. Lall, the same reply as Prince Wan. However, he never acknowledged receipt of the message nor gave any report on his talks with Mr. Chou En-lai.

4) Mr. Krishna Menon discussed in detail the prisoner issue in Peking. When doing so he had not sought any information on where we stood in the United Nations in our negotiations and it is likely that, for that reason, on a few points he crossed wires.

5) After the Peking talks he gave no account to the United Nations of his results and in his press conference he excluded all references to the United Nations.