

quiescence. Mr. Nehru urged the importance of concluding an armistice, stating that he feared otherwise the fighting would extend. I agreed with his estimate, stating that if the armistice negotiations collapsed, the United States would probably make a stronger rather than a lesser military exertion, and that this might well extend the area of conflict. (Note: I assumed this would be relayed.) I said that we were, however, sincerely trying to get an armistice and that only crazy people could think that the United States wanted to prolong the struggle, which had already cost us about 150,000 casualties and 10 to 15 billion dollars of expenditures. Mr. Nehru said that he completely accepted the proposition that we wanted an armistice and not to prolong the war. I said that the problem of dealing with the Republic of Korea was one which apparently most people overlooked. It could not be overlooked because the ROK had a moral interest and also a material position which could not be ignored. If in disgust their troops stopped fighting, that could presage not an armistice but a great military disaster for the United States forces there. Also if they decided to go on fighting, there could be no armistice. That is why we had introduced the proposal for an immediate freeing of the North Koreans who did not want to be repatriated. This was strongly desired by President Rhee, and would make the armistice more acceptable. In fact the North Koreans had already acted in this same way as regards South Korean POWs. We were, however, still striving to find an acceptable armistice formula. We could not, however, abandon the concept of political asylum. That was something in which President Eisenhower and the American people believed strongly. Perhaps in this matter we were idealistic, but the one thing for which Americans had been willing to fight and die was their ideals. We did not apologize for this.

9. It was agreed to meet again the next day to complete the discussion of other items.

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*Memorandum of Conversation, Prepared in the Embassy in India*¹

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Subject: India

NEW DELHI, May 21, 1953--5 p. m.

¹ This conversation took place at the Office of the Prime Minister.