

Indian Prime Minister's Press Conference on China

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Among the points suggested by correspondents for discussion at the Press Conference was "Jamming of Indian news broadcasts by China":

Prime Minister: There might have been, I have no precise information. I am told by Mr. Ramadhyani (Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting) that he has no authentic information about it. In fact, he is inclined to think there is no jamming. There might be sometimes, nobody can say. There is no regular jamming.

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Prime Minister: We will go on to the India-China issue. There is not really very much for me to say, unless you want to ask me a question, because I spoke yesterday on this and I am likely to speak tomorrow in the Lok Sabha.

Question: Could you tell us where the definitive map of the McMahon line is and who initialled it?

Prime Minister: We have got maps in our Ministries; I don't know where else they are - may be elsewhere too. I cannot at the moment say who initialled

it; but we have got notes attached to it, explanation notes by McMahon and others who worked with him, and there specific points are mentioned - this place is on this side of the line or that side of the line. You see, the broad approach was, I think, to get at the water-shed - make that the dividing line - waters flowing towards India, waters flowing towards China. In one or two places, the names I forgot, some minor changes were suggested for practical reasons. For instance, there was a Buddhist temple, which was slightly on this side, India's side; but it was greatly valued by Tibetans; so it was put on the Tibetan side. I think it was not McMahon, it was subsequently agreed.

Question: Yesterday in your speech in Rajya Sabha you said that Chou had repeated thrice his acceptance of the McMahon line in the course of his conversations with you in 1956 and that you did not entirely rely on your memory, but had those things written down. Did you exchange those written notes with Chou?

Prime Minister: At that time?

Question: Yes, Sir.

Prime Minister: No. Subsequently, long afterwards, I did send him an extract from it; it appears in the White Paper. I did not at that time send it to him.

Question: When was that extract sent to him?

Prime Minister: It is given in the White Paper - in one of my letters.

Question: Were the minutes of the talks confirmed by Chou En-lai?

Prime Minister: No; I am telling you I did not send him the minute. The minute I wrote was for record in our own Ministry and for our Ambassador etc., in Peking to be informed about it; but it was not sent to Mr. Chou En-lai.

Question: Even now, I don't think Mr. Chou En-lai has specifically repudiated that talk.

Prime Minister: No; that is true.

Question: Mr. Chou En-lai in his letter referred to telegrams sent by the Tibetan Administration in 1947. Have you got these or studied these telegrams or is it just...

Prime Minister: I had not seen it recently; but I have a vague recollection and in examining Chou's letter we tried to find these things out. But I have a vague recollection that a telegram did come to us at the time we were becoming independent. As far as I remember, at any rate the impression created in my mind was not about any major change there; but about some petty areas in dispute on the border. There had been disputes before; but I would not like to answer it because I have not referred to it again and this is the old impression when we were busy with Independence and all the change-over.

Question: Yesterday you made an offer of neutralisation to China over Longju. What will be the position if the Chinese refuse to quit Longju? What will India do, if they refuse to evacuate?

Prime Minister: As a matter of fact, I believe, the Chinese say that they are not actually in possession of Longju - may be round about it. The distances are very small. According to us, Longju is just on this side of the border. It is marked so in the map we have and it is the factual position. A little way round about there, presumably are Chinese forces; a little to the south of that, possibly, small Indian detachments - on our side, pretty small. We will have to see what developments take place, but obviously we want to avoid a show of force to push this or that, because one thing acts and reacts. This has been the first time, at Longju, that this firing took place between the Chinese and Indian detachments.

Question: Could you kindly throw some light as to what precisely was the Sino-Tibetan border before the 1914 treaty? Did the McMahon line, by and large, confirm a traditional border?

Prime Minister: Well, the idea was that it confirmed some kind of a border; but it was not strictly delimited or marked. And, as you know, it is mostly in areas where no human beings dwell; may be some do very occasionally, in a very small village somewhere; but broadly speaking, no people live there; or, if people use it, they use it in summer for grazing purposes, retiring in winter. So, there was no urgent need for anyone to define it accurately, neither for the Tibetans nor on this side. But I could not answer your question very precisely.

Question: Is Longju a city, or a village? What is the population of this place?

Prime Minister: I suppose it is a very small village with a few huts.

Question: In the light of your statement yesterday in the Rajya Sabha that Premier Chou En-lai's recent letter has shaken confidence in the assurances and words of either side and the presence of large Chinese forces in Tibet, do you envisage any large-scale change in our defence expenditure vis-a-vis our future planning? .

Prime Minister: No, I do not and I hope not.

Question: Listening to your speech yesterday, one got the impression that you were trying to make a fundamental difference between Soviet communism and Chinese communism. Will that impression be correct?

Prime Minister: I thought I did not refer to either. I do not think, as far as I remember, that I used the word 'communism' in the whole course of my speech.

Question: But there was some reference to it.

Prime Minister: I said nothing about communism. I do not think communism has much to do with it.

Question: Yesterday you said something that these things may be happening because of internal happenings in China. But you did not elaborate on it. Can you say what internal changes you had in mind?

Prime Minister: Are you referring to that minor event that happened ten years ago, the Chinese Revolution, or what?

Question: You were saying yesterday that gradually, step by step, there had been a change in the Chinese attitude.

Question: Some internal changes...

Prime Minister: That was only a remark. Various factors have produced certain results, and one, I actually said, was may be, what has happened in Tibet and our reaction to it. I said that it has angered and irritated them; and there may be other factors.

Question: Could you say something about the possible conflict of views in the leadership of China?

Prime Minister: How do I know about it? Many of you talk about conflict of views in the leadership of India!

Question: In the Lok Sabha, the other day, you said that though you do not expect a war with China, one must be prepared for any eventuality. In case of war, will India seek allies in the large world, is there is a full-scale attack from China?

Prime Minister: That is a very interesting question. I should like you, for your own benefit, just to think and answer it for yourself. It is interesting because I just don't see what I can do about it. Just don't think vaguely; think precisely and think a little definitely. It is one thing to have friendship of countries; it is another thing to have military alliances and the like. One does not know, if the whole world is at war, what might happen. That is a different matter. But this vague thinking of searching for allies is a sign of

utter weakness of character in an individual and in a nation. I hope, our country will not suffer that weakness of character.

Question: As a result of this Khampa revolt in Tibet, there have been many more violations of the NEFA border and pressure on NEFA than you were pleased to disclose. Is it not true?

Prime Minister: Is that an indirect reflection on my integrity, or what?

Question: Probably, you might not have sent diplomatic notes about them because they were of a minor nature.

Prime Minister: No; I do not think that is a correct statement. I think that we have in recent weeks disclosed this. I can't obviously say with certainty that there has been no straying of some personnel across the border. I believe there has been once or twice, but not exactly military personnel. Because, in some areas, there is no demarcation. A survey party or somebody comes across and once or twice they came across into the Indian territory and they went back. That might happen anywhere. But I do not think that we have kept secret any marked incursion across the border.

Question: In your Rajya Sabha speech, you referred to the letter of Mr. Chou En-lai in some grave terms and indicated that a grave situation has arisen. Would that mean that you would be able to undertake your visit to these countries (Afghanistan and Iran) in the next few days, or stay back?

Prime Minister: I am certainly going to Kabul and Teheran in three days' time. What has that got to do with it? That is taking an extraordinary, alarmist view? When I referred to the letter in same serious terms, it was

not because I expected some remarkable development quickly or even later, but that the letter showed a certain hardening of attitude. And it is always serious thing when in a controversy any country digs its toes in. Then, it becomes a question of prestige, how to undig or pull out your toes. In that sense, I said, it is a serious matter, but I do not expect at all any sudden development which would lead to any kind of conflict, even a small one.

Question: Is it in pursuance of this belief that you are not issuing any weapons of offence to our Indian troops?

Prime Minister: What do you think? They go about with bows and arrows?

The Press Correspondent: There is a lot of difference between weapons of defence and weapons of offence.

Prime Minister: Well, you are an expert at it!

Question: What was your assessment, of the Communist Party's attitude towards this controversy - yesterday's speech by the Communist spokesmen?

Prime Minister: The Communist Party of India? There is no question of assessment. Anybody can make his assessment. One felt that they were in an embarrassing position. That is the main assessment.

May I say one thing - it is really worth your attention - the statement that was issued by the Tass agency yesterday presumably representing the Soviet Government's view. Considering everything, it was a very fair statement, and an unusual statement for the Soviet Government to sponsor.

Question: May I invite your attention to your statement in the Lok Sabha about wrong Chinese maps being circulated. Now Mr. Chou says his maps are right. Does it show an attitude of imperialism on the part of China?

Prime Minister: This is an argument.

Question: Your comment on the Soviet position?

Prime Minister: I appreciate it very much.

Question: In your speech yesterday you mentioned that something had happened because of the change of policy in China. Were you referring to the Tibet part only or to internal changes inside China itself?

Prime Minister: I cannot tell you what I had in my mind at that time. But I should imagine all these things inside also were somewhere at the back of my mind.

Question: You referred to the Tass statement which reminds me of your statement in the Lok Sabha yesterday that you would welcome mediation by parties acceptable to both China and India.

Since some of those possible mediators have already accepted and published officially the maps as in China Pictorial, would it be possible for this country, to envisage mediation by countries which may be slightly different, say some of the Bandung countries?

Prime Minister: When I talked about mediation, conciliation etc., I was thinking about a number of small border disputes. Some of them are old disputes going back to the days when the British Government functioned

here - small disputes about two miles, three miles here, a village here, a meadow there. They had no great importance in those days because neither party attached much importance to that area. But these were continuing small disputes. They are those which have become important now because of various developments. Of course, every party now is very much conscious of that border and frontier. Previously they were not, they took it for granted. They have become important. I really was referring to that. When I talked about mediation, I was not thinking of inviting any country, Bandung or other. It is a small matter. Normally what is done is, each country affected appoints a representative to discuss and those representatives choose, may be, a third and they sit down and deal with the matter. You can't make these small matters increase their importance and ask other countries to mediate - ridiculous.

We resort to some procedure, whatever it may be. But the bigger question - I had not spoken of the bigger question that is of large areas which are shown in the Chinese maps. That I had not in mind then.

Question: Do you share the view of the President of the Indian National Congress that Communists in India are potential fifth-columnists? The statement in Moga...

Prime Minister: Look here, do you want to create family quarrels?

(Laughter). It is always unsafe to make general and sweeping statements, even though the statements may have a grain of truth in it.

Question: You have promised Parliament that you will make available in the library maps which show places involved in the border incidents. Would it be possible for a copy to be made available to the Press?

Prime Minister: Well, the maps we have placed in the library of Parliament are four or five. One is a Chinese map, a wall map which shows these frontiers according to China. But, really, unless you know Chinese it is little good to you. You won't understand it. Then, we have placed two copies of Chinese periodicals giving that map on a smaller scale. You probably have seen it. Some of you might have seen China Pictorial and others. We have also placed a map of India, one of our maps, indicating where the Chinese map comes in the border and indicating the passes etc. I will find out from my Ministry what can be done to provide you with this assistance to understand this border.

Question: Have the Chinese explained anywhere where exactly is the boundary?

Prime Minister: No. Not in all the correspondence anywhere. We will go to the next subject. There have been too many questions on one item.

Question: About Bhutan and Sikkim, yesterday you avoided any reference to Mr. Chou En-lai's statement in that connection, in his latest letter. Would you comment on that portion?

Prime Minister: No, no. I would not comment on that question. There is nothing to comment really. If I say anything I will say it tomorrow.

Question: There is a report going about that General Ayub has offered military aid to India in case India is invaded by China. Is there any basis of truth in it?

Prime Minister: It has not reached me - the report. Highly unlikely, if you say anything like that.

Question: One question on Tibet. You said several times that taking the Tibetan question to the United Nations will not do any good. In view of the strength of feeling of the Dalai Lama, could you say what harm you think it will do?

Prime Minister: I have mentioned two reasons, because in my view - and I have been advised by people who know better these things - procedurally and according to the Charter it cannot be brought up there. Of course, you may go beyond the Charter or anything, but Tibet has not been recognised by any country, practically speaking, as an independent nation. Therefore, it has no independent status there. From that point of view, therefore, you cannot deal with it, as if an independent nation comes to you.

On the other hand, the other part may be on the basis of human rights. Possibly, the fact that China is not a member, has not accepted the Charter or the Human Rights Declaration, or indeed is not in the United Nations at all, also makes it difficult to do that. But the real answer, I think, to your question is not a legal or procedural one, but what good or harm it might do. Obviously, it cannot lead to any positive results, as far as I can see, except strong speeches. Now, if you think that those strong speeches are going to result in achieving any objective, I do not see it. Tibet immediately becomes, even more than it is, the Tibetan question, a part of the cold war; and everything that becomes a part of the cold war becomes in that context more insoluble than ever till some wonderful, sea change comes over all the world. Instead of bringing relief to Tibet or the people of Tibet it actually may have the opposite effect.

Question: What shall be India's attitude if some other country sponsors Tibet's case in the United Nations?

Prime Minister: I have told you and I have announced publicly what we think about it. It may depend on what comes up, in what form it comes up. There are so many things. But our views are quite clear about it.

Question: You told the Lok Sabha last week that no doubt many things have happened in Tibet which are deplorable. Is there anything that any outsider can do in this respect? Is there anything that can be done from the outside?

Prime Minister: I do not know if an outsider - an individual, or a group or a country - can do anything. It is difficult to answer that question. This world is full of deplorable things about which perhaps, as an individual, one might do something, at any rate, I might say, in the shape of protests and dissociation and at that. A country, although, supposed to be much more powerful than the individual, has to function in a more limited sphere, the Government of a country, anything.

One thing I should like to say. We began today with discussing the India-China question. I do not think, and I told you, that anything big is going to happen in the foreseeable future, because I cannot imagine any greater folly of either country than to encourage anything or permit it. Nevertheless, the seriousness of the situation is not some border trouble, a mile on this side and a mile on that side, but the growing feeling of estrangement, irritation and sometimes anger, on both sides. That is 'a bad thing and that is a thing we have fought against not in regard to China only but in regard to any country in the world. That is to say, it is a feeling which accompanies the cold war outlook. The moment you get that, whatever the rights and wrongs of a question might be, the moment you get that, you have got into the wrong atmosphere, you lose your moorings, mental, psychological. You are

excited, passionate, angry and it is not a good thing for a country or a people to become that. I attach very great importance to it because that is the normal war psychosis or whatever you call it. There may be no war. I would beg of you - I do not ask you to treat this question lightly because it is a serious matter - to help in preventing people from getting excited. It is very easy for people to do that, it is so easy. And because of this I have regretted some type of demonstrations that have taken place here in Delhi and elsewhere before the Chinese Embassy. You know that we have all kinds of demonstrations and troubles internally. I do not like them but they do not very much matter. After all it is an internal matter, but you cannot project this internal behaviour on to the external field. That is dangerous. Something happens on the other side of the same type, then you get angrier still. This kind of thing does not lead to anything. It should not be the behaviour of a mature, thoughtful country. We should be firm but we should be at the same time not function in an angry and excited way. We should avoid these demonstrations which are no signs of strength. They do not affect anybody outside, nobody is frightened by them.