

## **TRANSCRIPT OF PRIME MINISTER'S PRESS CONFERENCE**

**HELD ON 4 APRIL 1959 IN NEW DELHI**

PRIME MINISTER : Well ,we shall begin now. I await your wishes.

### **TIBET**

QUESTION : How did the news of the arrival of the Dalai Lama come to be announced from Peking before it was announced here?

PRIME MINISTER : I am afraid I cannot answer that question. Of course, we could have announced it before and certainly a day before and possibly a day and half before; but among other reasons, one reason of our not announcing it then was security. We wanted to make adequate arrangements for security before was announced it.

QUESTION: This question is important because it seems there are spy activities on our borders, otherwise how could they know it when even our people did not know anything?

PRIME MINISTER: I cannot tell you because I do not know. I can guess if you like. I do not think any news could have got out of the border. I don't think it is conceivable. I don't say anything is impossible but it is very unlikely.

QUESTION: Did it leak out from Delhi?

PRIME MINISTER : That too seems very very unlikely. As a matter of fact, in Delhi for that brief period, a little before too, the secret was very well kept.

QUESTION: It remained secret from Indians but the Chinese Embassy got it and the Reuters also sent a telegram quoting diplomatic sources. Only we people did not know anything about it.

PRIME MINISTER : No diplomatic sources. I think these are vague guesses based on an intelligent anticipation of what might happen. I believe the Reuters first message was that he had gone to Bhutan. It was obvious that he was coming in this direction. Where he would get through, they were guessing.

QUESTION: The first communication about Dalai Lama was it made when the Chinese Ambassador met the Foreign Secretary or were there any earlier communications?

PRIME MINISTER: No. After the arrival of the Dalai Lama and his entry into India and our reception to him, our Foreign Secretary sent for the Chinese Ambassador to inform him of this.

QUESTION: Will the Dalai Lama function as Dalai Lama from India too, as spiritual leader of Tibet? What are the implications of this?

PRIME MINISTER: There is nothing in, shall I say, our regulations, rules, conventions about spirituality and how a person functions spiritually. That is not supposed to be a political post or designation. If people acknowledge him as a spiritual leader, they acknowledge him. There the matter ends. How can he function in Tibet when he is in India?

QUESTION: You will ask him not to associate himself with any political activities while on Indian soil?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, it is natural that any person in India cannot, is not expected, to function on the political plane in this way.

QUESTION: It is presumed when political asylum is given that the man is free to operate politically at least as far as other countries are concerned.

PRIME MINISTER: I don't think that is the general assumption at all.

QUESTION: There are several instances in Europe. For example our own people went and got asylum, for example, Raja Mahendra Pratap gave his own case as an instance in Parliament. He was operating politically in all the countries where he was given asylum.

PRIME MINISTER: When?

QUESTION: He says all his life until India became free. He was a political person in all countries he went to.

PRIME MINISTER: It was the time of the First World War chiefly when he functioned abroad. I don't think he functioned much since then, after the First War ended.

QUESTION: You have said that political activity must be ruled out. Does it also mean that he will not be allowed to make a statement explaining the facts?

PRIME MINISTER: No; I cannot tell you exactly what the position might be. We shall have to consider it because, as you know, quite apart from political and other reasons, he is a person greatly revered in India and certainly among all Buddhists and even non-Buddhists in India and it is not our intention to put what might be called undesirable curbs on him but we shall have to discuss this matter

with him and I am sure that he would not like to take any steps here which embarrass us and him.

QUESTION: Where is he likely to be kept? There is rumour that he will be kept in Ooty.?

PRIME MINISTER: I cannot tell you finally yet. But two things I can tell you-that he is not likely to stay anywhere near the frontier nor is he likely to go to Southern India.

QUESTION: Is there any correspondence with Mr. Chou En-lai on the subject of Tibet?

PRIME MINISTER: You mean recently.

QUESTION: Yes, within recent days.

PRIME MINISTER: No. We had no correspondence about Tibet at all. On one or two other matters some months ago we had correspondence-nothing to do with Tibet.

QUESTION: Will you tell us when and where you will meet the Dalai Lama?

PRIME MINISTER: I can't say that. I suppose I will meet him of course at some place sometime but we have not even given thought to that matter. We don't quite know when he will arrive. Of course there is no point in our rushing him. He had a hard journey, I suppose, and he comes slowly resting on the way.

QUESTION: When you spoke last in the Lok Sabha, you referred to letters from Dalai Lama and you said: "I should like to have a little greater confirmation about them, about what they are, in what circumstances they were written, whether they were written at all." I want to know have you any confirmation or any news about them and what was your bases that you doubted about their authenticity.

PRIME MINISTER: You see, the statement that the Dalai Lama was being compelled to do something, that the Dalai Lama in fact complaining of his own people, who revere him so much, seemed to me a very odd statement. Whoever else might be against the Dalai Lama, I should have thought that the great mass of the Tibetan people are not against him.

They are devoted to him. Therefore I could not understand that. Is that all?

QUESTION : Do you think that China has observed Panchsheel scrupulously in regard to Tibet?

PRIME MINISTER: I don't think the question of Panchsheel directly arises in this connection. We may disapprove of what one country has done or not. There is hardly a country which you cannot criticise on the ground that the principles of Panchsheel have not been observed but in this particular matter I don't quite see how that particular thing arises.

QUESTION: The Japanese Ambassador has written an article in a Japanese paper which was circulated here in press comments in which he says that this Panchsheel agreement with China has been wearing out for some time and the uprising in Tibet shows that it has completely worn out.

PRIME MINISTER: I have not seen that article but the Panchsheel lays down certain principles of international relations. Those principles, if they are good principles, they remain good whatever any individual or country might do. People seem to think that the so-called Panchsheel is some temporary arrangement to meet a temporary set of circumstances. It is not. It is a basic approach to international affairs and life generally. It may have to be adapted because of changing circumstances. If we believe in Panchsheel, we follow it, even if no country in the wide world follows it. Of course, it cannot be easily followed in a one-sided way, but that is a different matter. But our attitude will be to follow it. Our attempt will be to follow it, if we believe in it, as we do.

Now, what has happened in Tibet is related to the agreement between China and the authorities in Tibet, in 1950, I think. You will see that on both sides there, it is stated that that agreement has ended or broken up. There is no doubt about it and if both say so there is no doubt about it, and events also indicate that. Now, there is an important fact that it has broken down. That agreement was based on two factors-on the recognition of the sovereignty of China over Tibet and the autonomy of Tibet. These are two major factors. Well, that agreement has broken down; and it is not possible for me-because I don't want to speak irresponsibly and just refer to sentiments-it is not possible for me to give a precise account of what happened in Tibet. But it is well known that there have been conflicts and pulls there in various directions; and it is obvious that at present, since this uprising, there is no autonomy in Tibet. These are obvious facts whatever the background may be.

QUESTION: Do you think national autonomy is possible in a Communist State?

PRIME MINISTER: Surely, why not? I don't see any contradiction in that.

QUESTION: But it has never happened.

PRIME MINISTER: Well, you see, the difficulty is that we are gradually becoming conditioned, wrongly conditioned, by the cold war attitude in the world. If we have always to live with the cold war as our companion, well, many things,

happen which normally should not happen. But if the cold war was not there, we would all become a little more normal.

QUESTION: It is reported that you are having correspondence with the Dalai Lama. Is it about his wishes?

PRIME MINISTER: No, I don't know, except that I got a message from him which he sent to me on his arrival, and I sent him a very brief message of greetings.

QUESTION: To what extent would the Dalai Lama's personal safety to be Government of India's responsibility?

PRIME MINISTER : One hundred percent.

QUESTION: You had said that since this conflict started, autonomy in Tibet has disappeared.

PRIME MINISTER: Tibet has disappeared?

QUESTION: The autonomy of Tibet has disappeared.

PRIME MINISTER: Well, yes.

QUESTION: From which period do you date this breaking up of the agreement?

PRIME MINISTER: You might say the date when it officially ended in this date, say ten days ago. That is the official date. For the rest, there have been troubles over Eastern Tibet and a little in Southern Tibet. That means that there were troubles there but constitutionally it did not end. Actually, it may function or not because of these troubles.

QUESTION: In regard to the question of autonomy which we speak of, we also speak of autonomy in the case of the Centre and the States, where the Centre is autonomous in respect of certain subjects and the States are autonomous in respect of certain subjects and the States are autonomous in respect of certain other subjects. In what respect was Tibet considered to be autonomous?

PRIME MINISTER: I am afraid I cannot spell that out, except to tell my own interpretation of what Premier Chou En-lai said to me. I mentioned that in the Lok Sabha. He laid stress, first of all, that Tibet was and had always been, according to him, a part of the Chinese State, a part of the larger family of China. Then he said:

*"But Tibet is not a province of China. It is different from China proper. We recognize that and, therefore, we consider it to be an autonomous region of the Chinese State. The Chinese people are called the Han people. The Tibetans are not Hans. The Tibetans are Tibetans". That is what he said. Therefore, if you*

*compare it to India, here, first of all there is no question of any person or any part of India not being an Indian. He is an Indian whatever else he might be.*

Secondly, the autonomy of an Indian State is laid down, the measure of it, in our Constitution. It is definitely a limited autonomy. There are lists of subjects where the States are autonomous and there are other lists where the Central Government's authority prevails. Normally speaking the Central Government cannot invade the autonomy of the States in India certainly the States cannot do so in regard to the Central Government, but, abnormally the Constitution provides that the Central Government can take charge of a State under special circumstances. So, the type of autonomy here is different, I thought, from the type of autonomy in the autonomous region of Tibet. Of course, there are many other factors also. From the social, religious and economic points of view, there is considerable difference. I take it, between Tibet and many other parts of China proper. Tibet has been cut off from the world practically for ages. Economically speaking, it is very backward and this impact of vast changes which are taking place in China itself must produce tremendous reactions.

QUESTION: Sir, according to the Soviet Constitution an autonomous region is more backward constitutionally than the federating republic. Do you think the same provision is there in the Chinese Constitution, that is, like Inner Mongolia enjoying autonomous status like Tibet? What is the exact position? For example, in Russia, the Republics certainly have more powers such as a Foreign Minister, even a standing army and so on. Do you think that under the Chinese Constitution there is similar provision?

PRIME MINISTER: I am afraid I cannot answer this question precisely but I imagine that the various constituting units of the Soviet Union, including the autonomous regions, are all more or less wedded to a certain policy which might be called the Communist policy while Tibet was not and is not communist.

And the mere fact of the Dalai Lama being the religious head and till recently the political head under, broadly the Chinese umbrella, itself shows that it was very different.

QUESTION: Would you like to give a broad definition of the term "Suzerainty" as distinct from "sovereignty" ?

PRIME MINISTER: No. I am afraid it requires a jurist to do that and probably two jurists might differ - except that "suzerainty" is obviously less than "sovereignty".

QUESTION: How far does this disappearance of the agreement over Tibet with China affect our agreement about Tibet?

PRIME MINISTER: The disappearance of that does not affect it - if you read it - but I do not know what the consequences of developments in Tibet might be. You see

what was our agreement with China in regard to Tibet. Apart from our withdrawing certain small forces that we had there in old times, this agreement related to pilgrimage, to trade and trade routes, to certain passes over which these trade routes should pass. To that type of thing. And you know that thousands and thousands of pilgrims go to Tibet from India. Apart from Buddhists, vast numbers of Hindus go there to Kailash and the Manasarovar Lake and we wanted to make arrangements for them. That is one part of the treaty. The other was something about trade. The third was about the routes to be followed, the passes to be traversed. Then there was something which was definitely mentioned in the treaty—not directly—but indirectly it was there, the close contact of the Buddhists in Ladakh, who used to go, for some kind of education and training in the Buddhist scripture, to Lhasa and other places, to the monasteries there. Hundreds of this people used to go and hundreds are supposed to be there who did not take the trouble to carry any normal papers and passports, etc. They carried on in the old way. Now, how far all these will be affected by these developments, I cannot say.

QUESTION: Perhaps you have answered the question. But how are we politically concerned or affected by the events in Tibet?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, we are obviously concerned and interested in what happens there, in what political developments take place there. We cannot ignore them is another matter, to be considered in regard to circumstances. But I should like to put that apart from the purely political considerations, there are other considerations which move people powerfully. We have had to desire, certainly ever since we became independent, to interfere in the slightest degree in Tibetan affairs. But we could not give up our interest, call it if you like sentimental interest, apart from politics, and you can observe for yourself the enormous feeling that has been aroused in India by these recent developments in Tibet and about the Dalai Lama and all those.

It shows that deep sentimental attachment which has little to do with politics which goes back hundreds of years. You saw—I was not present that day—but some of you might have been present in the Lok Sabha three or four days ago when Members of every group, every party in the Lok Sabha, except the Communist Party, were vastly exercised over this question. It brought out rather, well very markedly and prominently how some matters are so deeply rooted in national sentiment that they override even party boundaries and they come up. They brought out also how the Communist Party in India has uprooted itself from those matters and feels quite differently—I am not talking about politics or economics—but just what is called national sentiment which has deep roots in a country. And we saw there that marked distinction of the people who however they differed among themselves, had that common bond of strong national tradition and sentiment, call it nationalism for brief, while the Communist Party had no kinship with that sentiment, it had not its roots there. It had its roots in different thinking and that document or statement that they issued exhibited that entirely different approach from the point of view of national sentiment. And the strong reactions of

Members of Parliament and those others outside to what was due to that. It had not much to do with statement or no statement. It had nothing to do, to my thinking, with any parliamentary privilege, but it had to do basically with that deep-rooted sentiment of the Indian people which was hurt by that statement. Therefore it reacted.

QUESTION: Are you aware of the dangers involved by the exploitation of this recent event in China by antiCommunist forces in India?

PRIME MINISTER: The situation is full of difficult aspects, naturally, and the worst of it is that it tends to bring in that atmosphere of cold war in India which we have tried to avoid. And when there is an atmosphere of cold war, parties to it do not consider matters dispassionately or in the cold light of reason but try to exploit the situation to the advantage of their thinking. There is that danger on every side, on both sides if you like, if you divide it, and that is, If I may introduce a slightly personal element, why when I spoke in the Lok Sabha two days ago rather deliberately, I suppressed myself in order to avoid adding to this heat of the cold war. I felt strongly enough about some matters but I felt that one must try to be a little dispassionate.

QUESTION: Don't you feel disillusioned or disappointed about the development in Tibet particularly in view of the panch Sheel agreement, when the first time it was propounded, you and Mr. Chou En-lai, went into night-long vigil to draft that agreement.

PRIME MINISTER: I do not think you are factually correct Mr. Chou En-lai was not here when the draft agreement was made. He was in Peking, I was here.

QUESTION: After he came from the Geneva Conference?

PRIME MINISTER: There was no agreement; there was a brief press communique then. That had nothing to do with Tibet at all. I do not think there was any reference to it.

QUESTION: In view of the good relations between India and China, has China, at any time, written to you asking you to use your good offices, particularly in relation of Tibet and China, to the revolt among Khampas and others?

PRIME MINISTER: May I say that for a variety of reasons, historical, sentimental, practical and of the present day, I have thought and I think terms with each other even though they might differ greatly in regard to their policies internally and further that neither country has any business to interfere in the other country because such interference does not produce any desirable results even from the point of view of the persons who want to interfere unless the result aimed at is just ill will and anger which is the essence of the cold war. The cold war does not convert the other party at all; it makes it

more rigid. SO that has been our basic policy, conditioned always of course by guarding, protecting the interests of India and the largere causes that we hold dear. Now, Tibet, culturally speaking, is an offshoot of India. That is to say of Buddhism not of India politically and we may be Hindus, we may be anything in India but Buddha is the greatest Indian that ever lived and we still in India are under the umbrella of this feeling for the Buddha. Tibet of course is far more so and there is this tremendous bond. We do not want Tibet to remain economically or socially backward. We want it to progress. Now, at any time during the last few years, last some years, has there been any correspondence, so far as I can remember, with Chinese Government of Premier Chou En-lai about Tibet with us but when Premier Chou En-lai was here last time we discussed many matters and among them Tibet.

I have just told you a little while ago what he said about Tibet to me. As a matter of fact, he discussed this question at some length explaining the Chinese Government's attitude to Tibet and pointing out what they respected and wanted to respect the autonomy of Tibet, and that they had no desire to push communism in Tibet, for the major reason, he said, that Tibet was as far removed from communism as any country could be and that it could not be pushed and imposed in this way and it was for the poeple of Tibet themselves to grow up economically and socially.

QUESTION: A Comparison was made in the Lok Sabha between the situation in Algeria and Tibet. It was said that in Algeria the French people are setting there. In the same way in Tibet also the Chinese are setting in vast numbers. What are your views?

PRIME MINISTER : The question essentially was about the Chinese settling in Tibet just as the French People had previously settled in Algeria. I do not know, first of all-one hears reports about large numbers of Chinese settling in Tibet; I have no information about it, about numbers, I cannot say. There is no comparison. If people settle in some other country and a country which is different, they bring with them some problems. That is true.

QUESTION: Do you propose to take any steps to persuade China to restore Tibet's autonomy?

PRIME MINISTER: There is no question of my taking steps to that end. First of all, the Chinese Government, so far as I know, has not denied the fact that Tibet should be autonomous. What they have laid stress on is that this has broken down, according to them, by the action of the other party; but they have not denied the fact that Tibet should be autonomous, and this business of giving advice to others does not always lead to right results.

QUESTION : There are reports that you have been in correspondence with the British Prime Minister recently regarding Tibet.

PRIME MINISTER : Those reports are not correct,except that frequently,not frequently but sometimes, I have messages from Mr.Macmillan.I reply to those messages,but there has been no particular correspondence about Tibet.

QUESTION : Has the Chinese Government conveyed its reaction to you regarding your giving political asylum to the Dalai Lama?

PRIME MINISTER: No.But it is an acknowledged fact that any country has the right to give asylum if it chooses.I don't think that is denied anywhere.

QUESTION: Some people talk of the Naga trouble and Hyderabad when this question of the autonomy of Tibet comes.Will you please clarify the two positions?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, there is no comparison,of course.There is Hyderabad.I do not know what to say.The question does not arise at all in any shape or form,because the Nizam and some of his advisers there adopted a policy which was patently a policy against the Government of India,patently against his own people's wishes and all that.In regard to the Naga problem the position is different certainly from that of Hyderabad.

The Naga area, you know, is a small area on our border, an area which has in the past some times given a lot of trouble and according to our policy, we give these tribal areas the fullest autonomy.There is no policy that we wish to impose upon them.This trouble started because they declared-some of them declared,an organisation-independence there.We did not start a shooting war because they declared independence.Some of them came to me and said, "we want to be independent".Others said , "No.We want to have something else".We did not punish them for saying that.It was only when they rather brutally killed a number of our officers and men, when they started a violent campaign,that we took measures to meet this because they were just waylaying and killing important people-our own officers and men and important Nagas who were with us.We had to protect those people and put an end to this kind of reign of terror that the Naga National Council in the name of the Naga people was creating there.I think that any person who knows how we have functioned there will probably be amazed at the constant attempt on our part-an attempt which has largely succeeded,I won't say always kept in view non-interference in Naga customs and the rest, and we have always kept open the door to a considerable measure of autonomy for them which , by and large, a great majority of them have accepted in conventions and congresses and the rest.

QUESTION : You said earlier that it was very important for India and China to remain on friendly terms now and in the future and you said that this was our basic policy conditioned by the interest of India and larger causes we hold dear. Do you consider that Tibet is among these larger causes or have we now by our agreement with Tibet put ourselves beyond taking up this matter?

PRIME MINISTER: Tibet or a country does not become a cause. It is a country. A country or the developments in the country may affect a cause. Certainly, we are deeply interested in the autonomy of Tibet and Tibet being allowed to carry on in its own way.

QUESTION: You said in the Lok Sabha that the rights renounced by India in Tibet were a relic of British imperialism. By the same token, does not the McMahon Line become a relic of British imperialism?

PRIME MINISTER: By the same token, you might go back a little when Asoka governed the whole of Central Asia and China governed at one time or other Burma and Indo-China, and Tibet at one time governed a bit of China. You cannot go back on history like this. At what period do we draw a line? There is a difference between certain extraterritorial rights in a country. Obviously, there is no question if we had 150 soldiers in Gyanste, or whatever the number was, no country would tolerate that kind of thing. That continued because they were there from the British times on the plea, mind you, of lack of law and order there, to protect our consulate or whatever it was. That is a completely different thing from conditions in a part of the country-border if you like - which had continued for generations and somebody comes and tell us that, "Oh! A hundred years ago this was different". There is no particular significance or meaning, unless that person wants to do mischief.

We have to accept certain things; we cannot historically trace back where the Indian frontier was. We accepted for a long time, for a hundred years or so, that the frontier is this and we have been in possession. We have functioned administratively and otherwise. There the matter ends so far as we are concerned, and as a matter of fact the McMahon Line was accepted by Tibet, and some parts of that McMahon agreement, by the then existing Chinese Government, were not settled, but this part was not objected to even then.

QUESTION: But, Sir, in view of the expansionist policy of communism and the policy of the CPI has been witnessed in the Lok Sabha recently, do you think that the security of Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim and even our country is threatened?

PRIME MINISTER: I do not think CPI's policy is expansionist. It is submissive. It is not expansionist.

QUESTION: Sir, in the latest issue of the Communist Party organ, the weekly New Age, they say that the spy ring is not only there in Kalimpong but it operates also in Calcutta, Bhutan and Sikkim. And they have also alleged that there was collusion between some of our political officers and the spies, and they have named Shri Apa Pant in this connection. It has come in the latest issue of the New Age.

PRIME MINISTER: I have not seen that. If the CPI goes about naming our principal officers, the CPI shows, even more than I suspected, a certain lack of balance in mind and total absence of feeling a decency and nationality. What they are I do not know. They cease to be Indians if they talk in this way.

May I say about this matter? Of course I said in the Lok Sabha about Kalimpong being a nest of spies. Well, I indicated that there was every variety and every shade and colour of spies there. Probably you could even balance the anti-Communist spies with the Communist spies there. In a great city like Calcutta no doubt you have all manner of people like that belonging to every shade and colour. To say that is one thing; for the matter of that in any great city in the world you will find these valiant representatives of the cold war.

By the way, may I mention one thing, which is horrifying to me? And this was a statement which appeared some little time ago and our External Affairs Ministry contradicted it yesterday, a statement by Prince Peter of Greece, who stayed in Kalimpong for a number of years. He made a statement—he is supposed to be and described as an international authority on Tibetan affairs—he said that the Indian Government had given assistance to the Chinese invasion of Tibet for fear that Tibet might fall under British or American influence. The Chinese armies were receiving supplies along the only road from the Indian border to Lhasa. He stated: "While I was still at Kalimpong I discovered for myself that truck convoys to Tibet, alleged by Indians to be loaded with rice, were full of military supplies!". Now, a more fantastic and despicable lie I have never heard and I say that by my knowledge. A person like Prince Peter of Greece, who had the hospitality of India for several years, dares to say that shows the atmosphere of Kalimpong, what it was.

Even a person thinking even slightly, cannot say that in 1950 thousands of trucks—how do trucks go, where do they go?—any supplies to Tibet had then and now to go through the Nathula pass. Now there is a road. We have built it. They had to go over mules, a most terrible journey on mule-back. In 1954-55, because there was a famine in Tibet, we agreed to send some rice—about, I forget now, may be ten to twenty thousand maunds, less than a thousand tons—and it was a terrible job to send this. You just calculate how many mules caravans to carry this rice over the Nathula. And this was in 1954-55. This is physically impossible apart from the fact that it is inconceivable that we should send military supplies of all things to the Chinese authorities—by mules—who had far more military supplies than we possessed, and then that we should do that is quite an extraordinary statement.

QUESTION : There has been a report in the press that the Chinese have in the last recent two or three weeks drawn our attention to what they said, or expressed the hope that the Indian Consul at Lhasa would take an objective view of the situation. What have you to say about that?

PRIME MINISTER: We take a very objective