P.N. Haksar Papers
(I-II Installments)
Subject File # 24

TOP SECRET 2

Record of the talks between PM and Premier Chou held on 20th April, 1960, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Prime Minister's residence.

PREMIER CHOW: This morning I spoke only a few words about what your Excellency had said. I would now like to clarify several problems with a view to seeking avenues of settlement.

The first question is whether the boundary is delimited or not. In this case, probably there is some difference of opinion in the understanding of the definition of the word 'delimitation' but there must have been some historical things which cannot be changed. Areas which are customarily adjoining each other, the boundary line between them may change by custom. This is what we call the 'customary line'. But as a modern nation, the boundaries have to be defined in terms of latitude and longitude, but this was not done and this precisely is the situation. In the part we had some dispute on eastern sector and this was left to us by imperialism. But despite the dispute since we are newly independent and friendly countries we exchanged views with a view to settle the question in a friendly manner. I also spoke about the China Burma border. The one common feature in the boundary between China and Burma and India is the presence of the Macmahon line. We stated that we do not recognise the Macmahon line but that we were willing to take a realistic view with Burma and India.

Then there is the question of maps. The Government of India wants us to revise our maps

17

in accordance with the Indian maps. We cannot accept this. We recognise the fact that there exist differences between the Chinese and the Indian maps and this difference ~~of~~ ~~maps~~ also obtains in the maps between China and our neighbouring countries. Maps can only be revised after proper survey and consultation. We said our maps were old maps and there were differences but we cannot revise our maps in accordance with the maps of our neighbouring countries. For example, Burma; we have signed an agreement with Burma and there will be a joint survey as a result of which we will agree on the precise boundary line and revise both our maps (Chinese and Burmese) at the same time. This proves that our stand has not changed and that it has always been clear. The Government of India says that the eastern sector is defined by Simla Convention. Actually, this line was fixed in the exchange of secret notes between the representatives of Tibet and Britain and, therefore, it came as ~~is~~ a shock to the Chinese people that India brought the Simla Convention in support of their claim. As your Excellency has said, Britain obtained many special rights from Tibet, in the year 1904 and that in 1954 Government of India voluntarily renounced these special rights. It, therefore, shocked and distressed us that India should try to impose on us the provisions of the secret treaty of the Simla Convention which, moreover, was never accepted by any of the Chinese Governments.

In spite of this the Chinese Government repeatedly stated that we do not recognise the line and yet we would not cross it. Although, in our view, it was not delimited we were still prepared to negotiate and we only adduced proof that areas south of Macmahon line belonged to Tibet and that there was a customary line which later changed. We did not put forward any territorial claim. We only advocated maintenance of the status quo. There was ~~and this was~~ 14

only a misunderstanding on the part of India.

As regards the western sector of the boundary, no question has ever been raised in the past and we never thought that there was any question on that side. If at all any question did exist, it was only about perhaps 10 places in the (western and the) central sectors which, we thought, could be solved by negotiations and that the status quo can be maintained, i.e., administrative and military personnel of India can stay there. As regards the western sector, India refers to the 1842 treaty as the legal basis for their claim, but we found on examination that it only sought to maintain borders of both sides and advocated friendship and non-aggression. We cannot find anywhere in the treaty a demarcation of the boundary. Moreover, the treaty was contracted only by local authorities. As far as this sector is concerned, new China has only inherited this area as shown by history, administrative relations and alignment of Chinese maps, and they did not make changes in these. In the early days after the foundation of the Republic of China we sent troops and supplies to Tibet from Sinkiang through Aksaichin area. It was only last year that the matter was brought up by India and it was a new territorial claim made by India.

Thus, although the boundaries between our countries are not delimited, it seems to us that we can avoid clashes and misunderstanding by maintaining the status quo and ~~segregation~~ removing the forces from the border thus making the border one of everlasting friendship. This may not be too difficult a task. After stating the facts we can see that the problem is a simple one. We have made no claims and we have only asked for status quo and negotiations. We feel that India and China have a reliable basis for this, namely, the Panch Sheel and our long-standing friendship. We were friends in the past

19

and we can be friends in the future. We can settle all disputes by negotiations and it seems to us that this sincere desire of ours can ~~be~~ materialised. From your Excellency's letters and from what I know of you, we know that you also entertain the same desire. We have already reached an agreement with Burma and the entire boundary question will soon be settled. The same should be applicable to the Sino Indian boundary question and we feel that there are no difficulties that cannot be overcome.

Last year we might have hurt each other and there might have been some misunderstanding between us. But let bye-gones be bye-gones. That is why we proposed a meeting of the two Prime Ministers and I accepted your invitation. I have come here to remove misunderstanding and find common ground between us on the border question. In the past 10 years our relations have been friendly and this is not only in the interest of our two peoples but in future too it is to the advantage of the world. We both have the same desire and I have no doubt that we, both of us, would like to see the situation ease and an agreement reached.

This is in the main what I wanted to say.

PM Thank you for the explanation of the Chinese Government's point of view which is largely on the lines of the correspondence which we have exchanged. It would be possible for me to repeat and ~~act~~ add to it again but that means our interpretation of not only history but facts also differs very greatly. For example, whether it is the eastern sector or the western sector there is a complete difference of opinion on facts. I should like to state that in no time of recorded history was this area (in the eastern sector) ever a part of China or Tibet,

of course, leaving out a few minor dents.

Your Excellency may say that these are territorial claims of India. But when did we make these claims? We have shown these areas in maps in precise latitude and longitude and this description is before China and the world for a considerable time and no objection was taken to these by the Chinese Government since 1949 and even before that period, nor was there any objection from the then Tibetan Government. So, it would seem extraordinary that when a question is raised repeatedly and factually no objection is taken and no challenge is made; but now, only since last year, we should be told of the Chinese claims in this regard. I do not want to go into the pasthistory but certain parts were accepted and acknowledged positively or negatively as belonging to India and only in the last few months objection is raised in a precise form by the Chinese Government. If our maps were wrong, as you hint, surely some idea could have been given to us. When we raised the question on many occasions. In the eastern sector, what is called Macmahon line is only acceptance of the findings of surveys done previously and no new line was drawn. This also indeed is a novel claim since there was no claim for generation - in any case ~~not~~ certainly not since 1949.

Your Excellency referred to the western sector and said that this has always been under Chinese authority and control. I do not know which part you are referring to. Does it mean that since 1949 it is under direct Chinese control or that before that it was under direct Tibetan control? I went to Ladakh some 44 years ago because I was attracted by the mountains and I went for mountain trekking. I again went to Ladakh some five or six years ago. This time I went by air and saw places then which are now occupied by Chinese forces. I presume, therefore, that this occupation has taken place in the last year or two

2/1

and is of recent origin. In any event, apart from the last year, at no time in the previous years, the Peoples Government of China or the then Tibetan administration raised any questions with us although our position was stated with precision on maps, with longitudes and latitudes, drawn after long surveys.

In fact, boundaries of India are part of the Indian Constitution and we cannot change them without a change in the Constitution itself.

My difficulty has been that while we went on stating clearly our position regarding the frontiers nothing was said with precision by China or Tibet for generations and naturally we thought that there was no challenge to it except in minor matters.

I would further ask, when did we claim this territory? When we made the maps? that ~~has been~~ is an old thing.

I may add that even ~~those~~ Chinese maps differ so much that hardly two maps are the same.

Repeating these arguments which are already contained in the notes exchanged, may not be very helpful. In the morning I had ventured to put a broad approach. If necessary, each part could be examined by us or by our colleagues, but the main thing is how this question appeared in this acute form during the last year without any previous intimation.

PREMIER CHOU: Your Excellency has asked why this question became acute in the last year. There are many reasons for it. I have just explained the situation regarding the eastern sector. We have always said that status quo should be maintained. We say this not only now but we have said it every since we touched that sector. We did not suddenly raise this last year. This has always

22

been our stand and remains our stand. You may ask why in our notes to the Government of India we mentioned so many historical facts. The answer is, since the Government of India put forward the argument of Simla Convention, we had to say why we could not accept it and we could not do so without mentioning historical facts. That made the question acute. But that did not change the boundary. We only tried to relate historical facts. Your Excellency has just now said very assertively that it was part of India even before 1914 (Simla Convention) and that it was never part of China or Tibet. We have, however, adduced evidence to show that it was not so. We pointed out that the situation did change and we stand by that explanation. But we have always advocated status quo because that is the most advantageous thing. We have never used our relations with that area before it was formed, for making a legal basis for territorial claims.

Indian maps have also changed several times. Chinese maps, on the other hand, did not change. Regarding the question of revising of maps raised in your letter of December, 1958, our position is to seek avenues of settlement as I feel it is no use arguing about details. It will merely lead to repetition.

Regarding the western sector, I have pointed out that the main part of the area, namely, Aksichin, is not under the administrative jursidiction of Tibet but of Sinkiang. Our jursidiction has been exercised there not only since 1949 but for a long time in history. Since 1949, Chinese Government have not only sent administrative personnel there but troops for patrolling purposes. It is the main route joining Sinkiang to Ari region of Tibet and this has been so for a very long time. Besides, Chinese maps published in the past have always shown it as Chinese territory and such maps have appeared for a considerable

period of time and yet to our knowledge there has been no objection from India. Your Excellency acknowledged in Parliament that this portion of the boundary was somewhat vague. In Indian maps different lines and different colours have been used. This area became a disputed area is of recent origin and so it was quite unexpected for us for it was unlike the eastern sector where we knew there was a dispute.

The views of our two sides still remain the same as in the correspondence exchanged. However, the purpose of making this explanation is to show that we have made no territorial claims but that we want to maintain the status quo with a view to reaching a solution and also to take the military forces away from the border. It is no use repeating what has been already said in our correspondence. I have come here to seek a solution and not to repeat arguments.

PM I can assure you of my earnest desire for settlement and understanding. Nothing is more painful to us than carrying on this argument. Mere repetition, however, does not take us very far because our respective viewpoints are so very different. Of course, it is possible to examine these viewspoints but it would seem to lead to no great profit.

Your Excellency said that we should maintain status quo; but the question is what is status quo? Status quo of today is different from the status quo of one or two years ago. To maintain today's status quo would be very unfair if it is different from a previous status quo. Therefore, we suggested another yard-measure, if you will remember, namely, to withdraw military forces beyond the lines of Indian and Chinese maps so that clashes should be avoided. I am glad that for the last several months no

2/4

clashes have taken place. But to maintain a status quo which is a marked change from previous status quo would mean accepting that change. That is the difficulty.

PREMIER CHOU: This is also a difficulty for us.

When you say that status quo has changed recently your Excellency probably refers to the western sector, but we know for certain that western sector has always been like that. Since libenation, our troops which went to Ari district of Tibet went through Aksaichin. Our supplies also went through this area and we never knew this was regarded as Indian territory and we also built a high way which could not have been built only in the last two years. To all this no objection was raised by the Government of India. So we had no doubt about this sector and we made no changes. It always appeared on our maps as it is now.

As regards Macmahon line we know that Indian forces moved upto the line only in the last few years, that is, after independence. But we never made this point for demanding pre-requisites. When we say status quo, we mean status quo prevailing generally after independence and this would also show the friendliness of our attitude.

As regards your proposal for withdrawal of troops, as a matter of fact, there are no Indian troops on the east of the line shown on the Chinese maps. So, there would be no withdrawal for Indian forces.

But if we apply the same rule to the Macmahon line it will mean that our forces remain where they are while there will be trouble for India and, therefore, we found this suggestion impossible to accept.

It seems to me, therefore, that status quo is fair to both. It would make no difference to India. A few individual points may need individual adjustment which can always be made.

Therefore, we feel maintaining of status quo

as it appeared when we became newly independent is the most reasonable ~~yardstick~~ way.

This is only the first day of our meeting and it is not necessary to reach a conclusion immediately. But I am putting it forward for consideration of both sides. If your Excellency agrees to this we would continue talking further about it; or otherwise, you may put forward a new alternative.

The talks were then adjourned till 3.30 p.m. on 21st April, 1960.