

April 21, 1960

**Record of Talks between PM [Jawaharlal Nehru] and
Premier Chou En Lai [Zhou Enlai] held on 21st April,
1960 from 4 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.**

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(I-II Installments) Record of talks between PM and
Premier Chou En Lai held on 21st
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PM Yesterday your Excellency mentioned to me various matters. It would ~~also~~ go to show that there is a good deal of difference in regard to facts. Interpretation of these facts is another thing, but what we differ in is the facts ^{themselves} ~~itself~~. If we start with different facts ^{our} thinking will be different too.

Yesterday I said that the Chinese maps were changing. You said that it was not so and ^{that} on the contrary it was the Indian maps which were changing. I was surprised to hear that. But I am not aware that our maps have changed. I have, however, seen the Chinese maps published in 1951, 1954 and 1959 and they all differ. But, in fact, I am not aware of changes in our maps.

You further said that Indian maps of the eastern sector had also changed. I am not aware of this. Eastern sector has been under our direct administration and this administration was intensified since our independence.

So far as the western sector is concerned, you referred to Aksaichin area. It is a big area. I do ~~not~~ know your remarks apply to which part of it. We are quite certain that large areas of it, if not the entire portion, were not in Chinese occupation. Evidence of this has come from large number of people who have been there and from my personal experience when I visited the place.

Apart from the northern tip of the area where apparently the Chinese had gone earlier, the Chinese forces seemed to have spread out to other parts of

Aksaichin only in the last year and a half.

I was further surprised to hear from/^{you}that the western sector was never in dispute. You will find from our correspondence exchanged on the subject that we have constantly been raising this question including the question of the road through Aksaichin. But we had no reply to these representations. Even before the incident at Kelat La Pass ^{Koungka} occurred, we expressed our protest in precise terms giving ^{longitude} ~~longitude~~ ^{longitude} and latitude. This was also the case in regard to ^{longitude} ~~longitude~~ ^{longitude}. But there was no reply/^{to}these protests.

So, from what I can see, our facts differ so much so that a confusion arises. I was surprised to hear your Excellency saying that in the western sector things have always been like this (^{namely} ~~namely~~, you have built roads and that you have sent your forces and supplies across the area on this road to Tibet). This was an old caravan route and you probably made it into a road four or five years ago. The Chinese forces have obviously spread out from the northern part. The Chinese forces were not there before and therefore this is a happening which took place only in the last year and a half. May I ask as to what exactly is claimed? Is it that it was in the occupation of the Chinese forces for the last so many years and that before the Chinese forces came in, the Tibetan forces were there? Patently not. We must however distinguish between eastern Ladakh and certain parts of it. We have long before drawn attention of the Chinese Government to this aspect in our correspondence and we have also protested against it. So it is incorrect to say that no dispute has existed about the western sector. In fact, there is a major dispute.

Perhaps we might discuss this matter separately.

As regards eastern sector apart from the Simla ²⁵⁶ Convention and the McMahon line, this area has always been connected with east India. We had not sent any armies there because we did not feel that it was necessary. We had only

some police stationed there but we have been administering the area quite fully. I, therefore, do not understand how this misunderstanding could have taken place.

Throughout this period the Indian maps have been absolutely clear and we have discussed them previously with reference to longitude and latitude. Therefore, there is no doubt left.

Yesterday you also mentioned about maintain^{ing}/status quo as obtained at the time of our independence. I agree, but what is the status quo?

I should like to have your views, your Excellency, as to how we should proceed with our talks. So far the talks have been vague and general and statements are made by both sides which are not regarded as being consent to facts by the other side.

PREMIER CHOU: Your Excellency says that there is a great difference in our understanding of facts; but facts are facts and facts are an objective reality. We do not have the same understanding temporarily; but we may have to appoint special personnel to find out what is the historical and material facts are. In a few days' time we may probably be not able to reach any conclusions but eventually we can find out whose understanding of facts is correct.

Just now your Excellency has put forward some views contrary to what I had said. You did so on the basis of certain facts as known to you but which are contrary to the ones known to us.

As regards the eastern sector, we knew all the time that there is a dispute on this sector. This dispute did not arise after the establishment of the Peoples Republic of China but it was left over by history, ever since the Simla Convention, which was never recognised by the Chinese Central Government. It was also not recognised by the KMT. As regards the secret exchange of notes, the KMT government did not even know about it. After the Peoples Republic of China was

established and we established diplomatic relations with India we mentioned about this to you in talks and in correspondence. Since both sides know that there was a dispute on this question both sides were anxious for a settlement.

As regards the western sector there has been no dispute. We have always considered it to be a part of China and it has also been so according to delineation on the Chinese maps. Indian maps have shown many changes. Your Excellency mentioned that there might have been some changes upto 1947 but actually there were changes in the maps even after 1947; (i) if no boundary line was shown but the area was shown in colours, (ii) then the boundary was marked as "undefined"; (iii) in 1954 however the same boundary was shown as "defined". Therefore, this would show that even after 1947, India made changes in the maps. Our maps, however, have all along remained the same except for some changes in small places but there has been no change in the general line. According to the administrative jurisdiction, the area has always been under China. Yesterday I pointed out that the greater part (the northern part) has been under Sinkiang where the Tibetans did not go but the southern part comes under the Ari area of Tibet. Ever since the 13th Century our administration has reached the place. This morning the Vice President said to me that these areas came under our control only in 1890, but that is not true. Moreover, we have found records of surveys made long ago.

So, in the western sector ever since we had our contacts with this area there has been no dispute. After 1950 we sent troops to Ari through this area. In Sinkiang our local troops used to patrol the border and in 1956-57 we built a road through this area but all this was allowed without anything happening till a year or two ago when some Indian soldiers came in and we disarmed them and sent them back. Then the dispute arose. Particularly in the last year when Indian Government said that the sector was defined by the treaty of 1842, and then our

attention was drawn to the sector and we were greatly surprised. We have said that there has been dispute about this area and no question has ever been raised. Indian maps changed even after independence and when you changed the line on the map to "defined" we were not consulted. This is different from the case of the eastern sector where we both know^e that a dispute existed and therefore we were willing for a settlement. But on the western sector we never knew that there was any such dispute and we were surprised.

Of course, it is in the last one or two years that a dispute has gradually developed from the eastern to the western sector and even in the central sector some parts are disputed. All this has come in our correspondence.

Even in the eastern sector after India obtained independence, Indian maps have made changes. Actually long after the Simla Convention (1914) the Indian maps followed delineation of the Chinese maps. Long after the Simla Convention was held, Indian maps still continued to mark the boundary in this area as "undefined" "undemarcated" and it was only recently that the words "demarcated" were added.

On the other hand, the Chinese maps have always been in accord with what we had in history.

Even after the Simla Convention certain areas to the south the McMahon line still continued to be under the administration of the Tibetan local authorities. We have mentioned all this in our correspondence and there is no need for me to repeat it again here.

In the last year we have exchanged^a lot of correspondence on the subject in which we have given facts and our views. Our understanding^{of} the facts is different and therefore views and standpoints are different. It is not desirable that we continue like this. We must find out some solution.

Your Excellency asked me as to how the talks should proceed. After comparing the documents and maps we realise

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that the facts greatly differ. I have, therefore, this idea in my mind and I would like to know whether it is workable. We should appoint a joint committee to look into the material we both have. It is not possible to do so in the duration of these talks. But the committee can take time and go through the facts on both sides. This may be useful for the sake ^{of} our friendship and for shortening the distance in our viewpoints. We should place all our material on the table. The Committee can even carry out investigation or surveys ^{on the spot} and find out what the facts are. Before agreement is reached by the Joint Committee, each side may maintain its stand and viewpoint.

While the Joint Committee is functioning, both sides should maintain status quo as is obtained in actuality. There should be a line between the two areas actually controlled by the two sides. In order to ensure tranquillity along the border, to facilitate the work of the survey teams and ⁱⁿ the interest of friendship we should maintain a distance between the forces on either side. We have suggested the distance to be 20 kilometers but your Excellency said that you were not in favour of it on account of geographical features. We may however fix any other distance which would be suitable to geographical features. Thus we can avoid clashes between the armed forces of our two countries. This is also for the purpose of establishing a border of perpetual friendship and preventing any untoward incidents.

PM Your Excellency referred to the eastern sector and said that ^{it was a} dispute has arisen in this case but that no such dispute had arisen in the case of the western sector till recently.

May I know what is your view on the eastern sector in the last 40 or 50 years ?

Is it claimed that that area was under Chinese or Tibetan occupation?

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PREMIER CHOU: Yes. Before the Simla Conference, area to the south of the line fixed by secret notes was under the jurisdiction of Tibet. Even after the Simla conference, some parts still remained under the local Tibetan authorities. Even after the Independence of India, the Tibetan Government protested to the Government of India regarding some parts south of the line. This shows that there was a dispute and we both noted that there was a problem in this sector and we wanted to reach a settlement.

PM As far as I am aware apart from minor dents, this area was never under the jurisdiction of Tibet or China, historically or actually, and that for considerable time in the past it has been directly under Indian administration. During the British days this area was divided in so many different districts. But gradually the administration spread. Of course, it took time because the area is rather wild and uninhabited. There might have been some disputes about minor dents but apart from this there has not been any claim made by either Tibet or the Chinese side regarding the areas ~~under the~~ now marked as belonging to China on the Chinese maps.

Reference has been made quite often to the Simla Convention and secret notes. I, however, do not think that there is any secrecy about it. It is true that the Chinese Government did not accept the results of the Simla Convention but as a matter of fact it is initialled by ^{the} Chinese Plenipotentiary. It may not be binding on China, but the Chinese representative was all along in the picture and he certainly knew about it. All records that we have, indicate that the Chinese representative was chiefly interested in the boundary between inner and outer Tibet. At that time the Tibetan administration was functioning practically as an independent entity. They came separately. They had separate credentials and they had full authority to deal with matters. Apart from this, as I have said above, the Chinese

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representative initialled the Convention and he certainly knew about it. It is true that the Chinese government did not approve of it and therefore the Chinese Government may not be tied by it but the Tibetan government was functioning with full authority and was legally competent to do what it did.

Actually the Simla Convention did not ~~fix~~ any new boundaries but it only laid down what the boundaries then were supposed to be.

But I do not know if after this Simla Convention at any time the Chinese government raised a protest on this issue. It is true that on minor areas there were petty disputes with local Tibetan border authorities ~~but~~ ^{and} the Government of India then took action against it, but the main issue was never raised.

In the mind^s of an Indiaⁿ, our northern border ~~was~~ ^{is} also associated with high Himalayan ranges. It consists of high~~er~~ mountain ranges and high water shed. If your Excellency were to look at the map then you would realise that if this normal principle which is generally adopted by nations in such circumstances is given up, the whole country would be at the mercy of the power which controls the mountains and no government can possibly accept it.

May I point~~ed~~ out that soon after the Peoples Republic of China was founded and diplomatic relations were established, question arose about maps, and we drew the attention of the Chinese government to maps which were not correct~~ed~~ and we presented our maps. Then we were told that the Chinese government had no time to look at these old maps but at no time did the Chinese government precisely reject our maps. If one sees the maps it would be clear that it was not a question of minor border ~~issues~~ ^{areas} but a big area of about ~~150 miles~~ ^{50,000 sq miles} which can be easily seen on the maps.

This applies to both the eastern as well as the western sectors.

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The position regarding western sector is that it is clearly defined and that we had no objection from the Chinese government at any time in the past except in the last year.

Your Excellency says that the western sector was never in dispute. In a sense we agree with the statement because we ourselves have never thought of it as a disputed area and our maps in this regard were never objected to.

As far as I remember the first time that any argument arose on this sector (western) was when a few patrol men were arrested by the Chinese side in 1958 (I do not remember the date exactly) but the men had disappeared and we made a reference to the Chinese Government and they confirmed that these men were arrested and then we protested and the Chinese government released these people. We then protested in 1958 about this area being occupied by Chinese authorities, and also regarding the arrest of these Indians. At the same time we also protested about Aksaichin road but no answer was sent to us.

Later, the broader issue arose about the western sector but our protest still remains unanswered.

During the few years preceding that, a number of patrol parties went over eastern Ladakh and they were not hindered. That showed that the area was still not under Chinese occupation. I am not referring by this to the northern tip of this area where the road was made but to the south and south-eastern part of the road which has obviously come under Chinese occupation only in the last one or one and a half years.

Your Excellency referred to our maps having changed. It is true that we changed our maps in 1953 but that was in regard to the extreme north of this area and this change was made after careful enquiries and was made in favour of the Chinese government. It is true that at that time, an area that ^{is} now included in our maps was ^{shown} ~~given~~ in colour shade and shown as ³⁵ belonging to Hunza ^{Hunza} of Kashmir State. We however examined

✓ this and came to the conclusion that it was no correct for Kashmir or Hunza to claim this area and so on our own initiative we left it out. This itself will indicate our desire not to show on our maps any area about which we had doubts.

In the last year and half we have precisely defined our borders in terms of longitude and latitude. This was before the shooting incident which took place last year. We repeatedly asked the Chinese side to precisely name the area they claimed, but it was never done.

To go back to the eastern sector, broadly speaking, at the present moment, our ^{administration extends up to 42} boundary ~~is~~ as shown on our maps except in regard to Longju. There was one place we found which ~~which~~ should be really on the other side and we voluntarily abandoned it. Kinzamani we hold as ^{being} on our side of the boundary.

In regard to ~~the~~ Longju there could be no doubt that we were in occupation of the place and we thought that we were in our territory. A junior officer there fell ill. He was suspected of having appendicitis and we were anxious to treat him immediately. We wanted to air-drop supplies for him ~~but~~ at Longju and we informed the Chinese government of this and in fact gave the latitude and longitude of Longju. This would show that we told the Chinese government that we were at Longju and to avoid any mistake about the name we also gave the correct longitude and latitude to enable them to locate the place. Nevertheless our forces were forced back and the place is now being occupied by the Chinese.

Your Excellency has suggested the establishment of a joint committee to study the material available with both sides and that further the committee should actually make an on the spot ^{enquiry if necessary} ~~enquiry~~ and determine the boundary line. An examination of the material held by both sides to determine the factual position would be useful and even if we do not agree on ^{3/6}

interpretation of facts, it will show ^{the} a degree of agreement or disagreement and we are always prepared to have the material examined.

But appointment of such a commission would raise all kinds of difficulties. Our border is 2500 miles long and it is a very difficult mountainous area, sparsely populated and sometimes with no population at all. The real question would therefore seem to depend on two factors :

- (i) examination of material including historical records, maps, ~~revenue~~ records etc., and
- (ii) it would also ^{depend} determine on some broad principle usually followed in determining the boundaries between countries which have especially a mountainous border area;

and that principle is ^{the} a principle of high water shed. It does not mean that this principle is absolute and final for demarcating the boundary line but it is one of the most important principles established in ^{the case of} a highly mountainous and sparsely populated area.

As your Excellency knows, there is difference of viewpoints on the boundary question; according to you the boundary is undefined and undemarcated. We agree that the boundary is undemarcated on the ground but we do not agree that it is not defined in the sense that it is now known precisely, although there may be some doubts here and there. But to ~~xx~~ say that all boundary is doubtful will bring us back to the original basic difference in approach.

A joint committee can hardly deal with this and it can at the most consider such material and try to lessen the area of disagreement. But the whole question is not only a geographical question but a political issue and such a committee would not be able to achieve much by wandering in high mountains. I would, therefore, suggest that we should jointly consider what the differences are from the material available with both sides and reduce the area of difference. It will take time but the persons can do the work here and

can report to us. At least that will make the facts clear. They can tell us ^{about} places where we agree, places ^{where} we disagree and places where there is misunderstanding. Your Excellency's proposal about a joint committee would however involve a long time and secondly it will also raise the question about status quo. What ~~would be~~ meant by status quo? Would it mean that we are petrifying something that we do not recognise today? Therefore, difficulties will arise. According to our information a large number of roads have been built in Ladakh area. So changes have taken place and they continue to take place.

If your Excellency thinks it worthwhile we can ^{have} given two or three ^{persons} names on each side and examine the question in a broad way.

PREMIER CHOU: The time is very short and I can ^{not} give an over-all reply today but I would talk about some individual matters:

(1) You referred to the Aksaichin incident in 1958. Some Indian patrols entered into Aksaichin and they were arrested. But we did reply to India's protest note on the subject. As regards Aksaichin ^{road} ~~note~~ we did not make a reply because we regard it as Chinese territory and therefore did not think it necessary to send a reply but later on when argument continued on the subject, we made further clarifications on the subject.

(2) You mentioned about new roads being built in Ladakh. Do you mean in Aksaichin?

PM: I mean south of the road that has been built in Aksaichin.

PREMIER CHOU: Do you mean in the disputed area of Aksaichin?

PM: I do not know what you mean. Perhaps more than Aksaichin area is in dispute. What I meant was that these roads have been built in the area south of the road which has been built in Aksaichin and ^{in the} disputed area ~~is one~~ which is shown in Chinese maps as belonging to China. It belongs to us.

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PREMIER CHOU: I do not know about this but I will make enquiries. As far as I am aware there^{is} only one road which goes through Aksaichin.

You suggested that both sides appoint some persons to look into the documents here. I will consult my colleagues whether the main documents have been brought here and are with us. As regards other questions we will talk tomorrow.

(The talks then adjourned till 10 a.m. on April 22, 1960.)

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