

Lok Sabha

23 March 1959

Written Answers to Questions

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT: SITUATION IN TIBET

Mr. Speaker: I have received notice of an adjournment motion relating to: "Disturbance in Tibet Culminating in open fighting between the Chinese forces and the local population in Lhasa near Potala and our Consulate General in that city".

Some time ago, a Call Attention notice was tabled and I see from today's Order Paper that the hon. Prime Minister has agreed to make a statement on this very subject. I may now request him to make his statement so that we can dispose of both together.

Shri Vajpayee (Balrampur): Adjournment motion relates to a discussion. What the Prime Minister will make is a statement.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members are fully aware that the moment an adjournment motion is tabled, I do not accept or reject it. I would like to hear from the Government what exactly they have to say and then make up my mind. If I do give consent, I will allow an opportunity for discussion.

Shri Tyagi (Dehra Dun): On a point of order. I would like to seek not only your guidance but also ruling with regard to the type of adjournment motions that may be admissible. Are disturbances in a foreign country a

relevant subject for an adjournment motion in this House? I want that to be made clear for future guidance.

Mr. Speaker: I will take that into consideration in deciding it. The hon. Member has stated his point. I have not yet decided. I am only hearing.

The Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru): May I say that the statement I am making now has nothing to do with any proposal for an adjournment motion?

Mr. Speaker: I only want to know the facts.

Shri Jawaharlal Nehru: I really wanted to make it clear that I was going to make it regardless of any proposal for an adjournment motion or any other motion.

Mr. Speaker: Both have synchronized. That was why I said it.

Shri Jawaharlal Nehru: Recent reports about happenings in the Tibet region of China have naturally aroused a great deal of interest in the country. The sequence of events is not quite clear to us. But I should like to make a brief statement on the principal facts in so far as we know them. Last week, on the 17th March, in the course of the discussion on the Demands for the Ministry of External Affairs, I referred briefly to the tense situation there. I mentioned that there had been a clash of wills, although no major violence had occurred recently. We have since received fuller information from our Consul General in Lhasa. It appears that various rumours in regard to the Dalai Lama caused

excitement in Lhasa. About two weeks ago, a large crowd of Tibetans entered the premises of the Indian consulate General.

They spoke to our Consul General about the rumours and their apprehensions. Three days later, a large number of Tibetan women came to our Consulate General to accompany them to the Chinese Foreign Bureau and be a witness to their presenting certain demands.

The Consul General told them that this was not proper and that he could not accompany them or associate himself with any demonstration. The Consul General brought these incidents to the notice of Chinese Foreign Bureau at Lhasa. He had rightly decided not to interfere in these internal affairs.

On the 20th March, fighting suddenly broke out between the Chinese troops and Tibetan elements.

There was firing in the vicinity of our Consulate General and some stray bullets hit our building. For some time it was not possible for the Consul General to go out of the premises. All our staff and their families are safe and no significant damage to property has been reported. Apparently, the situation in Lhasa has somewhat quietened down.

There are about 30 members of our staff in the Consulate General at Lhasa. Together with their families, the number is about 100. There are also 16 other nationals in the Lhasa region - that is, Indian nationals-about whom we have no full information at present.

As soon as the fighting broke out in Lhasa, we requested the Chinese Government through our Ambassador in Peking and the Chinese Ambassador here to ensure the fullest protection to our personnel and properties in Lhasa, and they promised to do so. On the 21st March, a representative of the Chinese Foreign Bureau in Lhasa called on our Consul General and suggested to him that for the better protection of himself and his staff, they should move into the Foreign Bureau.

We have instructed our Consul General to inform the Foreign Bureau that it will not be right or proper for our Consul General to leave the premises. A large number of Indian nationals are involved, including the families of our personnel, and there are valuable properties and records within our premises. In accordance with international law and usage, our Consul General and his staff and our records and properties are entitled to the fullest protection and we have no doubt that the Chinese Government will see the reasonableness of our request.

This outbreak of violence in Lhasa itself is a new development. Previously there had been conflicts in various parts of Southern Tibet between the Khampas and the Chinese forces. But the Lhasa region had remained quiet. The House will now appreciate that this is a difficult and delicate situation and we should avoid doing anything which will worsen it.

We have no intention of interfering in the internal affairs of China with whom we have friendly relations. In 1954 the Sino-Indian Agreement was concluded. It was in this that for the first time, the principle of Panch Sheel was stated. (An hon. Member: And Flouted!).

There is a long tradition of cultural and religious ties between India and the Tibet region of China. In this region lie many places of pilgrimage which are considered holy by both Hindus and Buddhists and large numbers of our people visit them every year.

The Dalai Lama, whom we had the honour and pleasure of receiving in our country in 1956-57, is held in high veneration by our people and we hope he is safe. We earnestly trust that the present troubles will be resolved peacefully.

Our Consul General at Lhasa and his staff are in a difficult situation for reasons beyond their control. I have no doubt that the House will wish me to send our best wishes on this occasion to him and to our other representatives in the Tibet region.

Mr. Speaker: In view of this elaborate statement, I do not give my consent to the moving of this motion for adjournment.

Shri Vajpayee: On a point of information, Sir. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister the position of the Dalai Lama, whether he is safe?

Shri Jawaharlal Nehru: I am afraid I have no correct information as to where he is. But, I certainly hope he is safe.

Shri M. R. Masani (Ranchi East): Mr. Speaker, Sir, while bowing to your decision about the adjournment motion which I respectfully think is perfectly correct, may I say that the wide-spread concern rather than the interest which these developments have elicited in the country would be served if expression was given to these feelings by a discussion in this House. I wonder if the Prime Minister would agree to this House having an early opportunity to discuss these developments and their implications in regard to our frontiers and other implications that would follow.

Shri Jawaharlal Nehru: It is novel, perhaps, Sir, for this House to discuss events in another country. Sometimes, of course, they may have some bearing and reference is made in the Foreign Affairs Debate. But, a general discussion over events which are happening in another country would be a bad precedent which may have far-reaching consequences.

Shri Frank Anthony (Nominated Anglo-Indians): Sir, may I say that we are not only intimately but anxiously concerned about the attitude of the Government. Our attitude vis-à-vis Tibet has been a little confused. We do

not know whether the Government has accepted the suzerainty of China over Tibet.

Another matter with which we are deeply concerned is whether, because of an obvious sort of communist terror there, the Government would be prepared to give asylum to the Tibetan refugees in India.

Shri S. A. Dange (Bombay City-Central): Sir, the Prime Minister has stated that any such discussion would be an interference in the internal affairs of another country. For example, if Peking were to discuss the arrest of Master Tara Singh, there would be enough protest here. (Interruptions).

Shri C. D. Pande (Naini Tal): The analogy is not correct.

S.A. Dange: If Peking were to discuss the land reforms which are being threatened with civil war here, there would be enough trouble. (Interruptions). I understand why Shri Masani is anxious to discuss it here.

C. D. Pande: We want to discuss it fully because.....

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. I have already given my ruling regarding this adjournment motion.

C. D. Pande: This is not like Hungary or Algeria.

Shri Asoka Mehta (Muzaffarpur): Sir, you should not give your ruling quickly. This is a matter in which we are all profoundly concerned. You must not express yourself with quickness, Sir. (Interruptions). I would say that you may permit the House to express its views on this subject.

Shri Goray (Poona): Whatever ruling you may give, I beg to submit this. The other day you stated, Sir, that every adjournment motion does not necessarily mean that it is a motion of censure against the Government. You said that an adjournment motion can be treated as a sort of an expression of concern which the whole House feels. This is a matter on which most of us, excepting the Communist Members here-everybody-feels concerned and rightly so. Therefore, you may allow us to move this motion for adjournment. It is not a censure on the Government but it expresses our deep concern at a particular development.

You will remember, Sir, the other day Shrimati Renu Chakarvartty here said that all these things were exaggerated. I suppose even the Prime Minister was under the impression that all these were not completely true. But, now, all of a sudden, we find that fighting has broken out in Lhasa. This is not a sudden development. So many things must have happened before that. Therefore, I say, this is a development which threatens us also. Supposing tomorrow there is more fighting in Tibet and refugees come to our border. There will be such an immense pressure on our border that India will get involved willy-nilly. Therefore, I think, this matter should be discussed here. It is not a censure move against the Government. And, I submit that before you decide to rule it out, you should ponder over it.

Mr. Speaker: Regarding the desire to have discussion on the subject, I can only say this much. The argument that is advanced is that if fighting should develop, a number of people would be forced to leave their hearths and homes and come away to this side. That could be said with respect to any internal trouble in any one of our adjacent countries. What will happen if they come here? If they come here, let us look after the problem, when it arises.

Shri C. D. Pande: The problem has arisen.

Mr. Speaker: Therefore, this can be said easily on Mongolia and North China. Some of them may come and ask for refugee here.

Whether it is a matter for an adjournment motion or not, it is for me to decide. I have to decide whether we are at all concerned with a particular matter and whether it is a matter of interfering with the internal administration of a particular State. All that we are concerned with is this. We are on friendly terms with our neighbouring states with which we have to deal. The internal affairs of a State have never been discussed in this House. I am not going to allow, either directly or indirectly, any discussion regarding this matter. (Interruptions).

I have disallowed this. Now, let us proceed to the next item.

Papers to be laid on the Table.