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(Part II—Proceedings other than Questions and Answers)
OFFICIAL REPORT

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HOUSE OF THE PEOPLE

Saturday, 24th April, 1954

The House met at Quarter Past Eight
of the Clock.

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

(No Questions: Part I not published)

MESSAGE FROM THE COUNCIL OF STATES

Mr. Speaker: The Secretary will read the message from the Council of States.

Secretary: Sir, I have to report the following message received from the Secretary of the Council of States:

"In accordance with the provisions of rule 125 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Council of States, I am directed to inform the House of the People that the Council of States, at its sitting held on the 23rd April, 1954, agreed without any amendment to the Muslim Wakfs Bill, 1952, which was passed by the House of the People at its sitting held on the 12th March, 1954."

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Prime Minister.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee (Calcutta North-East): Before the Prime Minister is called upon, may I draw your attention to an important motion, notice of which I have already given...

Mr. Speaker: I received a notice. The usual procedure is that the hon. Member need not call attention to it in
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the House. When the notice comes to me, I send it for scrutiny and factual statement to enable me to know as to how far that motion is admissible.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee: If you will permit me, the elections are to be held tomorrow and an indication of the mind.....

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. The hon. Member will see that the point that he has raised is solely a point of law and order so far as the State Government is concerned. All that he can ask for is such information about it as the Minister can get and can give, but the subject matter cannot be a matter for discussion in the House. The Press report, on which the hon. Member relies, is after all an *ex-parte* statement of the facts and we do not know what exactly happened. The Minister will make enquiries and give me the information early. I have sent the notice to him with my endorsement.

STATEMENT RE: INDO-CHINA

The Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs and Defence (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru): The House is aware that in February last France, the United States of America, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United Kingdom agreed to convene a conference of themselves and the People's Republic of China, to which other interested States are also to be invited, to consider, respectively, the problem of Korea and Indio-China. This conference begins its sessions at Geneva next week.

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We are not participants either in this conference or in the hostilities that rage in Indo-China. We are, however, interested in and deeply concerned about the problem of Indo-China and, more particularly, about the recent developments in respect of it. We are also concerned that the conference at Geneva should seek to resolve this question by negotiation and succeed in doing so, so that the shadow of war which has far long darkened our proximate regions and threatens to spread and grow darker still, be dispelled.

An appreciation of the basic realities of this problem, of the national and political sentiments involved, and of the background and the present situation there, both political and military, is essential to that kind of approach which alone might prove constructive and fruitful.

The conflict in Indo-China is, in its origin and essential character, a movement of resistance to colonialism and the attempts to deal with such resistance by the traditional methods of suppression and divide-and-rule.

Foreign intervention have made the issue more complex, but it nevertheless remains basically anticolonial and nationalist in character. The recognition of this and the reconciliation of national sentiments for freedom and independence and safeguarding them against external pressures can alone form the basis of a settlement and of peace. The conflict itself, in spite of heavy weapons employed and the large-scale operations, remains even today a guerilla war in character with no fixed or stable fronts. The country is divided between the rival forces, but no well held frontiers demarcate their respective zone. Large pockets and slices of territory and populations, change allegiance to one side or the other from day to day or over-night. Battles are won and lost, places taken and retaken, but the war rages year after year with increasing ferocity. Millions of Indo-Chinese, combatants

and others as well, irrespective of what side they are on, are killed and wounded or otherwise suffer and their country rendered desolate.

In Indo-China, the challenge to imperialism, as a large-scale movement, began in 1940 against the Japanese occupation. During the war against Japan, the United States and allied troops were assisted by the Viet-Minh (founded in 1941) and by other nationalist and other groups, at the head of which was Ho-Chi Minh. The Viet-Minh proclamation of the time referred to the "defence of democratic principles by the United States, the U.S.S.R., Britain and China" and asked the Great Powers to "proclaim that after Japanese forces had been overthrown, the Indo-Chinese people will receive full autonomy".

After World War II, a provisional Government, of which five out of the fifteen members were communists and which was supported by moderate nationalists, Catholics and others, was established. Ho-Chi Minh was elected the President of the "Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam" which was proclaimed in September 1945 and was recognised by the then Government of China. On March 6th, 1946, France, which had now returned to Indo-China after the war, signed an agreement with Ho-Chi Minh, recognising the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam "as a free State with its own Government, Parliament, Army and Finance and forming part of the Indo-Chinese Federation and the French Union". This arrangement, however, did not last long. Conflict between Ho-Chi Minh's Republic and the French Empire began in 1947 and has continued ever since. In June 1948, the French signed an agreement with Bao Dai, the former Emperor of Annam, and made him the head of Viet-Nam which they recognised as an Associate State within the French Union. Similar agreements were made by the French with the two other States of Indo-China, the kingdoms of Laos and Cambodia.

At this stage, the conflict in Indo-China begins to assume its present and most ominous aspect of being a reflection of the conflicts between the two power blocs. Material aid and equipment given to France by the United States became available to the French for the war in Indo-China. The Viet-Minh, on the other hand, although still maintaining that the war was one against French colonialism, it is reported, received supplies from the People's Republic of China, whose Government continued the recognition accorded to the "Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam" (Viet-Minh) by its predecessor.

Intervention followed intervention and the ferocity of war increased. Negotiations became increasingly difficult and abortive. It is in this background that the developments of recent months have taken place.

The first of these developments is the decision of the Berlin Powers to have this problem considered by the Geneva Conference. We welcomed this conference and expressed our hope that it would lead to peace in Indo-China. We saw in it the decision to pursue the path of negotiation for a settlement. I ventured to make an appeal at the time for a cease-fire in Indo-China in a statement made in this House, which was unanimously welcomed by the House.

While the decision about the Geneva Conference was a welcome development, it was soon followed by others which caused us concern and forebodings. Among these were:

(1) the repeated references to instant and massive retaliation, to possible attacks on the Chinese mainland and statements about extending the scope and intensity of hostilities in Indo-China;

(2) an invitation to the Western countries, to the ANZUS powers, and to some Asian States to join in united and collective action in South-East Asia. This has been preceded by statements, which came near to assuming protection, or declaring a kind of Monroe Doctrine, unilaterally, over the countries of South-East Asia.

There were thus indications of impending direct intervention in Indo-China and the internationalisation of the war and its extension and intensification.

The Government of India deeply regret and are much concerned that a conference of such momentous character, obviously called together because negotiation was considered both feasible and necessary, should be preceded by a proclamation of what amounts to lack of faith in it, and of alternatives involving threats of sanctions. Negotiations are handicapped, they start ill and they make chequered progress, if any at all, with duress, threats, slights and proclamations of lack of faith preceding them.

Another element which must again increase our misgivings, is the stepping up of the tempo of war and the accentuation of supplies in Indo-China. Accentuated supplies have obviously come to the aid of the Viet-Minh which, it is alleged, enables them to mount great offensives calculated to secure military victories to condition the forthcoming conference to their advantage. To the French Viet-Nam side, United States aid has been stepped up and assurances of further aid have been made.

To us in India, these developments are of grave concern and of grievous significance. Their implications impinge on the newly-won and cherished independence of Asian countries.

The maintenance of independence and sovereignty of Asian countries as well as the end of colonial and foreign rule is essential to the prosperity of Asian peoples as well as for the peace of the world.

We do not seek any special role in Asia nor do we champion any narrow and sectional Asian regionalism. We only seek to keep for ourselves and the adherence of others, particularly our neighbours, to a peace area and to a policy of non-alignment and non-commitment to world tensions and wars. This, we believe, is essential to us for our own sake and can alone enable us to make our contribution to lowering

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world tensions, to furthering disarmament and to world peace.

The present developments, however, cast a deep shadow on our hopes; they impinge on our basic policies and they seek to contain us in alignments. †

Peace to us is not just a fervent hope; it is an emergent necessity.

Indo-China is an Asian country and a proximate area. Despite her heavy sacrifices, the conflict finds her enmeshed in intervention and the prospect of her freedom jeopardised. The crisis in respect of Indo-China therefore moves us deeply and calls from us our best thoughts and efforts to avert the trends of this conflict towards its extension and intensification, and to promote the trends that might lead to a settlement.

The Government of India feel convinced that despite all their differences of outlook, their deep-seated suspicions and their antagonistic claims, the great statesmen assembling at Geneva and their peoples have a common objective, the averting of the tide of war. In their earnest desire to assist to resolve some of the difficulties and deadlocks and to bring about a peaceful settlement, they venture to make the following suggestions:

(1) A climate of peace and negotiation has to be promoted and the suspicion and the atmosphere of threats that prevail, sought to be dissipated. To this end, the Government of India appeal to all concerned, to desist from threats, and to the combatants to refrain from stepping up the tempo of war.

(2) A cease-fire. To bring this about, the Government of India propose:

(a) that the item of a "cease-fire" be given priority on the Indo-China Conference agenda;

(b) a cease-fire groups consisting of the actual belligerents, viz., France and her three Associated States and Viet-Minh.

(3) Independence. The conference should decide and proclaim that it is essential to the solution of the conflict that the complete independence of Indo-China, that is, the termination of French sovereignty, should be placed beyond all doubt by an unequivocal commitment by the Government of France.

(4) Direct negotiations between the parties immediately and principally concerned should be initiated by the conference. Instead of seeking to hammer out settlements themselves, the conference should request the parties principally concerned to enter into direct negotiations and give them all assistance to this end. Such direct negotiations would assist in keeping the Indo-China question limited to the issues which concern and involve Indo-China directly. These parties would be the same as would constitute the cease-fire group.

(5) Non-intervention. A solemn agreement on non-intervention denying aid, direct or indirect, with troops or war material to the combatants or for the purposes of war, to which the United States, the U.S.S.R., the United Kingdom and China shall be primary parties, should be brought about by the conference. The United Nations, to which the decision of the conference shall be reported, shall be requested to formulate a convention of non-intervention in Indo-China embodying the aforesaid agreement and including the provisions for its enforcement under United Nations auspices. Other States should be invited by the United Nations to adhere to this convention of non-intervention.

(6) The United Nations should be informed of the progress of the conference. Its good offices for purposes of conciliation under the appropriate Articles of the Charter, and not for invoking sanctions, should be sought.

The Government of India make these proposals in all humility and with the earnest desire and hope that they will engage the attention of the conference as a whole and each of the parties concerned. They consider the steps

they have proposed to be both practicable and capable of immediate implementation.

The alternative is grim. Is it not time for all of us, particularly those who today are at the helm of world affairs, on one side or the other, in the words of His Holiness the Pope, which I feel cannot be improved upon, to "perceive that peace cannot consist in an exasperating and costly relationship of mutual terror"?

DELIVERY OF BOOKS (PUBLIC LIBRARIES) BILL

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Education (Dr. M. M. Das): Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I, on behalf of the hon. Minister of Education, beg to move:

"That the Bill to provide for delivery of books to the National Library and other public libraries, be taken into consideration."

Sir, this is a very small and simple, non-controversial, but at the same time a highly commendable measure, and I am confident that this small measure will receive the blessings of the House in no time. It will, I am sure, receive the unanimous and vocal support of every section of this House. Sir, the object of this Bill, as has been explained in the Statement of Objects and Reasons, is to secure free of cost four copies of all publications that are brought out in this country to build up the National Library in Calcutta and other libraries which will be specified at a later date by the Government of India by notification in the Official Gazette. The importance and necessity of building up well-developed libraries in the country cannot be over-emphasised. It has been the policy of this Government to do everything in their power to develop and establish libraries in this country. The development and improvement of library service in this country has occupied a very important place in the Five Year plan of the Education Ministry of the Central Government. According to the Constitution, establishment and maintenance of

libraries come under the ambit of the States Government's activities. So far as the Central Government are concerned, they have prepared schemes and invited the attention of the State Governments to those schemes. They have asked the State Governments to implement those schemes and have offered liberal financial assistance for their implementation. The activities of the Central Government are not confined to preparation of schemes and giving grants to State Governments alone. The Central Government would like to see that in four different parts of the country, four well-developed public libraries spring up, come into existence. One is already in existence—the National Library in Calcutta; the next one—the Central National Library in Delhi, will come into existence in the near future. Regarding the other two remaining libraries, although no final decision has been taken regarding their location and character, we entertain high hopes that they will also come into existence in the near future. It is necessary as well as highly desirable that all these four libraries should get free copies—I mean copies free of cost—of every publication that is brought out in this country. The provisions of this Bill, which is a very small measure and which is before this House, impose a statutory obligation upon all the publishers in this country to supply, to send at their own expense, free of cost, four copies of their publications, one to each of these libraries.

There is already in existence a legislation "The Press and Registration of Books Act of 1867" which provides for sending two copies of all publications for the use of the Central Government but for these two copies, the Central Government have to issue executive directives. It has been thought expedient not to complicate matters with the State Governments by making an amendment to the existing legislation to that effect. So, the present Bill has been brought before the House.

At the present stage of the Bill, I do not propose to take any more time of the House; but before I resume my seat I beg to draw the attention of the