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PRIME MINISTER'S PRESS CONFERENCE, PEKING

Below is the transcript of the Prime Minister, Mr Whitlam's press conference held in Peking, China, on 4 November, 1973.

Treaty of Nationality

PRIME MINISTER: Ladies and gentlemen: You already have the Joint Press Communique. There is one thing I can add to it. Following the dinner the Australian delegation gave to the Premier and the Chinese side last night, there will be discussions about a Treaty of Nationality between the two governments. There are two other things I should say about the questions which I will invite you to put to me. One is, I gather it is the custom of this country for guests not to purport to state the policies or views of the host. Secondly, it is the custom not to detail conversations which the Chairman has with visitors. The subjects of the conversations have already been given to you. There is one matter of particular importance which my colleague, Dr Patterson, could announce to you at this stage.

Sugar Agreement

DR PATTERSON: Mr Prime Minister, ladies and gentlemen: As you know Mr Crean and I have had discussions with several ministries over the last few days. And one of the very important and substantial matters which has been now finalised is that the Chinese Government has agreed to purchase very large quantities of sugar from Australia within the provisions of a long-term sugar agreement with Australia. Quantities involved are in the vicinity of 300,000 tons of sugar per year. The initial agreement will be three to five years duration. Details will be the subject of further discussions between the Australian Sugar Industry and the China National Cereals Oil and Foodstuffs Import and Export Corporation and the governments of China and Australia. For some time the industry in Australia, the sugar industry in Australia, has been anxious for China to install specialised modern

bulk handling facilities for the importation of sugar - large quantities of sugar - and the Chinese Government is making arrangements to install specialised modern bulk receiving facilities for raw sugar as well as some other commodities. Also, the Chinese Government is making arrangements to send a team of technical people to Australia to study and inspect Australia's bulk handling facilities which are amongst the most modern in the world. I might say gentlemen that this agreement will be of tremendous importance to Australia. It is the culmination of a series of discussions which commenced when Mr Whitlam first came to China in 1971. We have carried it on - carried those discussions on - a number of ways since that time and the sugar industry in Australia through the C.S.R. company who are the agents have also continued those discussions.

PRIME MINISTER: May I repeat the significance of the concluding remarks that Dr Patterson made. He inaugurated these discussions in July 1971. They have come to a successful conclusion on his return visit. Are there any questions to Mr Crean, Dr Patterson or me?

Q. Prime Minister, can I ask Dr Patterson a question?

PRIME MINISTER: Yes.

Q. Can you place any estimate, any value, on this agreement with China?

DR PATTERSON: The details, as I mentioned, will be worked out in discussions between the industry, the two industry representatives, and the Governments. But, naturally, they will be related to world prices. World prices at the present time are \$150 Australian per ton so it will be, if you take present world prices, it is a figure somewhere around \$50 million per year over a three to five year period. But it could be, of course, that long-term negotiations as with the Commonwealth Sugar Agreement, that the long-term price will be a fair price to both countries not necessarily a high price. That is it will be a fair price, a negotiated price, as has been the practice in the long-term sugar agreement between Australia and the Commonwealth Sugar Agreement with Britain which, as you know, expires at the

*Sugar
Contract*

end of next year.

*Nuclear
Testing*

Q. Prime Minister, may I ask a question? We understand, while in Peking, you lodged a protest to the Chinese Government about the nuclear testing in the atmosphere. Can you give us the terms of that protest and indicate the response of the Chinese Government?

PRIME MINISTER: This subject was raised in the conversation with Chairman Mao. As I said, details of such conversations are not disclosed. The approach that the Australian Government has made on this matter is well known. I reiterated it.

Q. That's with Chairman Mao. What about with the Premier? Does the same answer apply?

PRIME MINISTER: Yes. He was there. The Premier was there in the talks with the Chairman, as also was the Assistant Foreign Minister.

Q. Was the question raised in the other talks.

PRIME MINISTER: No.

Q. Prime Minister, could you be a bit more explicit on the Treaty of Nationality which you referred to in your opening remarks?

*Treaty
of
Nationality*

PRIME MINISTER: There is very little more I can say at this stage. It covers the general question of what nationality people belong to irrespective of or dependent on their ancestry. And there has been a confusion up until now about the doctrine of dual nationality as asserted in respect to persons of Chinese ancestry overseas. The confusion has been largely due to the fact that the Kuomintang Government, the Chiang Kai-shek regime always asserted that persons of Chinese ancestry abroad remained Chinese citizens. This is not an attitude that the Government of the People's Republic has ever taken.

Q. The question of the Middle East. Premier Chcu raised this in private discussion with you. Did he say what he thought of the Australian attitude of neutrality in the Middle East?

*Middle
East*

PRIME MINISTER: First question, yes. Second question, no. We discussed the Middle East question as, I suppose, I can say we discussed practically every matter anywhere in Asia. We stated

our respective positions. There was no suggestion by the Premier that Australia's attitude should change. I heard his attitude, he heard mine. It was one of the matters upon which we differed.

Defence

Q. Prime Minister, did you discuss defence and, if so, can you outline to us your own defence projects for the region?

PRIME MINISTER: We didn't discuss the question of defence at all. The other subject, I think, is rather too wide to take up here.

Relations

Q. As a result of your talks do you feel there is any role for Australia in helping to improve relations between China and the five important South-East Asian countries in their relations with Australia?

PRIME MINISTER: I believe the example of the fruitful relations between China and Australia will be reassuring to the ASEAN nations.

Q. Did Premier Chou repeat the request I believe he made to Overseas Trade Minister, Dr Cairns - a request that Australia might be able to explain to these countries in South-East Asia which don't at the moment recognise China, explain to them the Chinese point of view particularly on the question of overseas Chinese and the nationality question. Did he ask you to pass on any messages?

ASEAN

PRIME MINISTER: No. However, I heard his views on all these matters, so naturally when I discuss any such matters with the ASEAN countries I would have in my mind the view of the Chinese Government as I heard it directly from the Premier. But the Premier certainly didn't seek for Australia a role of apologist or intermediary in any way. I was very happy to hear his views on all these matters, and he seemed interested in hearing my views - my government's views - on such matters.

Five Power

Q. Did Premier Chou ask you to explain the Australian position on the Five Power Arrangements?

PRIME MINISTER: There was scarcely any mention of this. It was mentioned but very briefly.

Q. While you said Premier Chou did not ask you to become an intermediary link with South-East Asian countries, is it your intention to try to explain to them the Chinese view or is it just a matter of if they raise it? Are you going to specifically go out to try to explain China's position in the ASEAN countries?

PRIME MINISTER: I have said again and again that the Australian Government doesn't seek or purport to be an advocate or apologist for any other government including the Chinese Government. Very clearly, however, in having discussions with any of the ASEAN countries, and there will be such discussions in Australia within the next couple of weeks and there will be in all of them within three months. In their countries this subject would be discussed. It would be a pretty empty discussion if such matters were not discussed. I expect it would be discussed. The discussion as far as I am concerned will be all the more relevant in the light of the discussions I have had in Peking.

discussions
with
ASEAN

Q. You will feel free to pass on Premier Chou's explanation of the Chinese attitude?

PRIME MINISTER: I will certainly explain the position as I understand it. But it is not a question of passing on any messages or views, that was not sought, and it was not volunteered. I don't think you would expect it to be sought or volunteered. The great advantage of talks in depth and at length that we have been able to have this week is that there has been an opportunity of getting a very thorough understanding of all relevant matters.

Q. We understand you have issued an invitation to Premier Chou to come to Australia. Was there any indication from him whether he would accept?

PRIME MINISTER: The Premier knows that he would be very welcome to the Australian people and the Australian Government. I think, however, one must accept that there are some office bearers in the world to whom it would be an embarrassment to press an invitation. A man who is Premier of China or is President of the United States cannot be expected to accept a fraction of the

invitation
Premier ✓
Chou visit

invitations that he receives. There are already scores of invitations on the Premier's plate. Obviously we would be very happy to receive a visit from him, but it is not really courteous to press such invitations. There will be, I would expect, quite regular interchanges of visits between Ministers and officials or our two governments. The great thing that has been achieved this week is that a generation of lost contact between our two peoples has been successfully brought to an end. We can now communicate, in Australia, in China, between ministers and officials and people of the two countries without any inhibitions. The lost generation is now buried.

Q. Did you raise your idea of a regional forum and, if so, what was the Chinese reaction?

PRIME MINISTER: The general idea is welcomed. Clearly, however, it takes a little time to create such an arrangement or framework where you still have some confusion about diplomatic relations between countries in this region of the Western Pacific or South-East Asia. I notice I have had a few questions but very few questioners.

possible
Asian
Pacific
conf

Q. Dr Patterson, about the Sugar Agreement. Will the Sugar Agreement have a cushioning effect on the Australian Sugar industry at the time of the ending of the Commonwealth Sugar Agreement?

DR PATTERSON: As you know, the British Commonwealth Sugar Agreement is due to expire at the end of next year. It is the stated intention of the British Government to phase out the 335,000 long tons which Australia sells to Britain and has sold for a long number of years. It is hoped that that phasing out period will be around three years. The effect of the proposed long-term agreement between China and Australia will naturally be well received because in the event of the loss of this British market occurring suddenly then we would be able to phase in the new or proposed agreement. You can see the significance of it because it will be bigger than the United States quota for Australia under the United States Sugar Act and the

Sugar ✓

magnitude of this agreement can be gauged by the fact that the biggest bilateral or special arrangement between Australia and any other nation.

Q. Do you regard the Chinese Government's willingness to allow Chinese nationals to migrate to Australia as a concession?

PRIME MINISTER: There were no arrangements hitherto, so we now have the position where there can now be family reunion with China as already with many other countries. You remember that this matter was raised in the Parliament a fortnight ago by Mr Martin Nicholls.

*Family
reunion
(Chinese
nationals)*

Q. How do you see the future relations between Australia and China as a result of this visit?

PRIME MINISTER: We can now expect that there will be direct and substantial relations between China and Australia as there should be between countries of our respective significance in this region or, indeed, in the world. It has been a very great gap in the relations of each country that there were no direct relations between both of them. The fruitful relations between China and Australia will make for fruitful relations between China and many other countries in the region and between Australia and many other countries in the region. It is a good rational friendly breakthrough.

Q. Could you tell us something about how the results of your recent visit to Japan last week were appreciated here in China?

PRIME MINISTER: The significance of Japan's and Australia's relations were well appreciated because of the sheer magnitude of the trade between the two of us. It was understood, I think, that Australia sold more to Japan than to any other country and Japan sells more to Australia than to any country other than the United States. It was accepted, therefore, that relations between Japan and Australia must become very close indeed.

*Japan
(relations)*

Q. You said that the Middle East was one area of disagreement between the two governments and nuclear testing was obviously another. Can you tell us the other areas on which you disagree?

PRIME MINISTER: Bangladesh, Korea.

Q. During your visit here I understand you met Prince Sihanouk, the head of the Cambodian Government in exile. Can you tell us the purpose and the outcome of that discussion?

PRIME MINISTER: While I was in Peking where Prince Sihanouk resides, I welcomed the opportunity to have an exchange of views with him. He is the acknowledged spokesman of GRUNK and FUNK. He is the only representative of either who is known to me or to the ambassador or to Australians in general. It was a valuable opportunity to hear at first hand his views on the situation in his country and in the region.

*Cambodia
Prince
Sihanouk*

Q. It doesn't suggest any change in our recognition of the present Lon Nol Government?

PRIME MINISTER: No, as long as the Lon Nol Government is in possession of the capital of Cambodia and is in the United Nations the present Australian attitude towards it will continue.

Q. How are we voting in the United Nations?

PRIME MINISTER: We have been abstaining on the procedural issues.

Q. Will we continue to abstain?

PRIME MINISTER: When the question of the seating of the Government arises we will vote for that Government with which we have relations. But we are abstaining on the procedural matters. We did not oppose the inscription of the item. Our concern in Cambodia is that the people of Cambodia should have a government of their wish. We will do all we can to put an end to the hostilities and to deter any supplies from outside. It is the only part of Indo-China where there has not yet been a ceasefire or an agreement or an accord. This is all the more deplorable since, for so many years, from the Geneva accords of 1954 until the invasion of Cambodia by and from South Viet-nam in March 1970 Cambodia had enjoyed an undiminished peaceful identity.

UN voting

Q. Mr Crean, did you have the opportunity of discussing the world inflationary situation with the Chinese?

MR CREAN: Yes. Mine have been more in the nature of watching briefs during these procedures and the Chinese assure us they

*Inflationary
situation*

have not got the problem of inflation, but I think they have got a lot of problems on their plate that I would not like to have.

Q. Did you discuss the question of territorial waters?

PRIME MINISTER: No, we didn't. This is a matter though that the officials may well have discussed. It is obviously a matter of very great interest to our two countries. But the Premier and I didn't discuss it. I believe the interest which we each have are well understood at the official level. Our ambassador has had discussions on this matter already.

*territorial
waters*

We have found this a most pleasant visit indeed and the ambassador, who is in residence here, and all the Australian officials have enjoyed very much the co-operation of the Chinese authorities. I believe our visit has been all the more pleasant and fruitful because we now have such an eminent ambassador in residence here.