

Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru

Volume 23

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Trade Across the Tibetan Border¹

26 September 1953

While in Ranikhet, I have met Dr. Weber², the FAO expert, who is working here on behalf of the UP Government. I find that he is doing good work there to develop horticulture and the preservation of fruit. He told me that the UP Government had wanted him to go to the Bhutias, who live near the Tibetan border, to help them develop fruit-growing, etc. The Bhutias are a problem for the UP Government and for us. There are about fifty thousand of them. Previously, they lived a hard life, but carried on somehow with some trade across the border. They took foodgrains and brought back wool. All this has been upset and their life has become even harder.

2. From the political point of view, even apart from the humanitarian, it is rather important that we should help them to better themselves and to find some work. There is the question of our making some arrangement for a barter of wool with some foodgrains. I have written to you about that separately.

3. Another approach is to develop horticulture there which, I understand, is quite possible. In fact, good results are obtained in these hills in developing horticulture. In view of this fact it would have been desirable for Dr. Weber, the FAO expert, to be allowed to go there, accompanied by some UP official, to draw up a scheme of horticultural and similar development. Unless there is some special objection to his going there, I

¹ Note to Secretary-General, MEA, and Foreign Secretary, Ranikhet, 26 September 1953 JN Collection. Extracts.

² F.B.C. Weber

would permit him to cross the Inner Line for this particular purpose. I have informed the Chief Minister of the UP about this and suggested that if he wants Dr. Weber to go to the Bhutias; we might be prepared to reconsider this matter and, if there is no special reason to the contrary, to allow him permission to go there. He would, of course, be accompanied by a UP official....

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To Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad

24 July 1953

Footnote:

Speaking at a conference of peasants on 19 July, Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq, President of the Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir, ridiculed the idea of independence of the Kashmir Valley. He said that Kashmir, with its borders touching "Tibet, China, Russia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, would be the hotbed of international intrigues and cannot maintain its independence for long."

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To Balvantray Mehta³ (Tibet Day)

New Delhi

August 24, 1953

My dear Balvantray,⁴

I enclose a press cutting about a proposal to observe "Tibet Day" on September 12.⁵ I do not know who form this committee apart from the

³ File No.G-11/1953, AICC Papers, NMML.

⁴ General Secretary, AICC.

⁵ A committee reportedly set up in New Delhi on 22 August to observe "Tibet Day" was to organize meetings and pass resolutions expressing sympathy for the people of Tibet in

names mentioned, that is, Professor N.G. Ranga,⁶ M.S. Gurupadaswami⁷ and Rajbhoj.⁸ I should like you to find out who else is in the committee, and, are there any Congress members in it?

Obviously, no Congressman should join such committee or participate in the observance of "Tibet Day". This is an unfriendly act to China and is against the policy we have pursued during these years. There is absolutely no reason for observing such a day now. I really do not understand why Professor Ranga or the others should suddenly decide to observe this day.

I think we should inform members of the Party that they should keep aloof from this. If you will remind me, I shall mention this at the Party meeting tomorrow.

If there is any reality about this announcement of "Tibet Day", it might be worth while for you to send a brief circular letter to our PCCs about it so that they might not be misled?⁹

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

their "temporary subjugation" and warning the people in India of the "danger that lurks on India's borders" by the presence of Chinese troops in Tibet.

⁶ He was a Member of the Council of States and represented the Krishikar Lok Party.

⁷ (b.1923); participated in the freedom movement; practised law at Bangalore; editor, Prajamata, 1948-53; elected to the House of the People, 1952; Member, National Executive of Praja Socialist Party, 1957-63; Member, Rajya Sabha, 1960; Minister of State, Department of Atomic Energy, 1967, Food and Agriculture, Community Development and Cooperation, 1967-69; later became associated with Janata Dal; Minister for Petroleum and Chemicals, December 1989-November 1990.

⁸ P.N. Rajbhoj, Member of the House of the People representing the Scheduled Castes Federation.

⁹ Nehru noted on 5 September 1953, "Joint Secretary, T.N. Kaul, was quite right in the answer he gave to the Counsellor of the Chinese Embassy about the Tibet Day. He might have gone a little further and added that this particular note in the Press... was made by some opposition splinter in Parliament who have no importance whatever. We disapprove entirely of this appeal by a few persons and we attach no importance to it."

Residual Problems Regarding Tibet¹⁰

30 August 1953

I have read through all these papers and notes. The course suggested in them seems to me to be much too slow. I think we should move more rapidly and more effectively in this matter.

2. I have drafted a telegram, which should be sent to our Ambassador in Peking, conveying a message¹¹ on my behalf to Premier Chou En-lai...

4. As for the points in issue, I do not think there is any doubt in our mind about the line we should take up. We shall undoubtedly have to withdraw our military escorts. If the Chinese Government want us to remove our Post and Telegraph Offices on the trade routes to Gyantse¹² we shall have to agree. But they must offer sufficient substitutes for them. There should be no difficulty about normal trade or trade agencies or right of pilgrimage. Anyhow, all these matters have to be discussed with them.

5. For the present, we need not raise the question of the frontier, but this will have to be brought in a larger settlement. In that settlement, I should like to make clear our special position in the border States. Perhaps an occasion might arise even before that settlement for us to make this clear. But, for the present, no mention need be made.

6. I agree that it will be desirable to confer a Military rank on the Maharaja of Bhutan. This matter might be taken up with the Defence Ministry.

7. For the present, we shall send my message to Premier Chou En-lai and give an Aide Memoire to the Chinese Ambassador here. The Ambassador

¹⁰ Note, 30 August 1953. JN Collection. Extracts.

¹¹ See the next item.

¹² According to the Indo-Tibetan Trade Regulations of 1914, India had its trade agency at Gyantse, where the Indian Trade Agent, with his small military escorts, was posted. Gyantse was also the terminus of the Indo-Tibetan telegraph line maintained and run by the Government of India.

should be informed that I have sent a direct message to Premier Chou En-lai on this subject...

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Message to Chou En-lai¹³

1 September 1953

It has been a matter of deep satisfaction to me to note the growing cooperation between our great countries in international affairs. I am convinced that this cooperation and friendship will not only be to our mutual advantage, but will also be a strong pillar for peace in Asia and the world. I hope that our two countries will maintain full contact and cooperate with each other in dealing with problems of mutual interest. That has been your Excellency's wish and I reciprocate it fully.

2. Developments in Tibet in the last three years have naturally led to a new situation. We have recognized this situation and are fully prepared to adapt ourselves to it. We have pointed out that certain rights have grown out of usage and agreement which are natural between neighbours. Your Excellency informed our Ambassador last year that there is no difference of point of view in regard to Tibet between India and China and that your Government is anxious in every way to safeguard Indian interests in Tibet. You added that there is no territorial dispute or controversy between India and China in this matter and that "we are not desirous of abruptly bringing to an end existing institutions and arrangements, as such a course would create a vacuum."

3. The Government of India have been anxious to come to a final settlement about pending matters so as to avoid any misunderstanding and friction at any time. On the 2nd August 1952, they presented a note to Your Excellency's Government about all pending matters expressing

¹³ Sent on 1 September 1953 to N. Raghavan to convey it to Chou En-lai. From Agreement between India and China on Trade and Intercourse between India and the Tibet region of China, 1954, GOI, MEA.

their willingness to discuss them and to modify certain practices and even to remove some of them, if they are considered as affecting the dignity of China. Subsequently, at the request of the Chinese Government, they agreed to the establishment of Consulates-General in Lhasa and Bombay. No further steps have been taken since then to negotiate a settlement of other problem in Tibet.

4. The Government of India feel that it would be advantageous to both our countries to deal with all remaining problems together. Piecemeal consideration of each problem does not lead to satisfactory solutions. Indeed, difficulties and frictions have arisen from time to time over relatively petty matters. Recently, some incidents have taken place when the local authorities in Tibet stopped our Trade Agent in Western Tibet from proceeding on his official tour to Rudok and his staff to Taklakot, both important trade marts for Indian traders and pilgrims. There has been a forcible seizure of his wireless set which is essential for the performance of his duties. We learnt of this incident with surprise and regret, because it did not seem to us in consonance with the friendly relations between our two countries.

5. The Government of India's concern in this matter was conveyed to the Chinese Embassy here. It was pointed out that Your Excellency had agreed that, pending settlement of all outstanding matters, existing usages would continue. A request was made for the return of the Trade Agent's wireless communication facilities and for the Tibetan authorities to be instructed not to interfere with the functioning of our Trade Agent. The Embassy was also informed about the replacement of the escort at Gyantse and Yatung and the proposed inspection visit of our Political Officer in Sikkim to our Trade Agencies at these places. A reply has been received from the Chinese Embassy¹⁴, but this has apparently been made without full knowledge of the facts and of assurances given by Your Excellency.

¹⁴ See the next item.

6. I do not wish to trouble Your Excellency with further details, but I would suggest that our respective Government take the earliest opportunity to consider all pending matters so as to avoid such incidents. Meanwhile, I would request that instructions may be issued to insure that there is no interference with existing usages. I would invite Your Excellency's Government to confer with our Government at the earliest suitable opportunity, either in Delhi or in Peking, on all such matters affecting relations between our two countries. I am convinced that this will lead to a satisfactory settlement and remove every cause of possible friction.

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Restrictions on Indian Representatives in Tibet¹⁵

5 September, 1953

The Government of India have noted with deep satisfaction the growing cooperation in international affairs between India and China. It is their desire and firm policy to encourage this cooperation and friendship between these two great countries and thus to serve the cause of peace in Asia and the world. With a view to further this friendship, it has been their wish to settle by negotiation such pending matters as exist between the two countries.

2. In the course of the last three years, developments have taken place in Tibet which have created a new situation. The Government of India have recognized this new situation and expressed their readiness to adapt themselves to it.

3. All such pending matters affecting relations between the two countries in Tibet were specified in a note handed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Peking, on the 2nd August, 1952. The Chinese Government had, on 14th

¹⁵ Aide memoire drafted by Nehru on 2 September and presented on 5 September 1953 to the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi. From Agreement between India and China on Trade and Intercourse between India and the Tibet region of China, 1954, GOI, MEA.

June, 1952, expressed the desire that all such matters should be settled by negotiation and gave the assurance that they "were not desirous of abruptly bringing to an end existing Indian institutions and arrangements in Tibet, as such a course would create a vacuum." The Government of India were in entire agreement with that desire and welcomed the assurance given by the Chinese Government.

4. From time to time, incidents have taken place in Tibet which have caused the Government of India some concern. In the course of the last few weeks, more especially, some incidents have taken place which affect the functioning of the Government of India's representatives and other personnel in Tibet. Their Trade Agent in Western Tibet has been prevented by the local authorities from proceeding on his official tour to Rudok. His staff has been prevented from visiting Taklakot on official duty. Both Rudok and Taklakot are important trade marts for Indian traders and pilgrims. The Trade Agent's wireless set, which is essential for the performance of his duties, has been seized.

5. Other incidents have also taken place. It is the practice for the military escorts at Gyantse and Yatung to be replaced from time to time. The Government of India have been informed that the Chinese Government are not in a position to agree to the replacement of these escorts. The replacement of one of these escorts has already crossed the border and has reached Yatung. This movement took place before the Chinese Government's reply was received. The Government of India have also been informed that their Political Officer in Sikkim must present a passport, duly visaed by the Chinese authorities, when he pays a visit to Gyantse and Yatung.

6. The Government of India learnt of these incidents with surprise and regret. They drew the attention of the Chinese Embassy in Delhi to these incidents. The Chinese Embassy informed the Government of India on the 24th August, 1953, that the Chinese Government proposed to make certain changes in the existing arrangements. The proposed changes have not been discussed by them with the Government of India. This unilateral

procedure does not appear to the Government of India to be consistent with the assurances given by the Chinese Government to the Indian Ambassador in Peking and with the friendly relations which exist between India and China.

7. The Government of India would like to draw attention to the fact that as early as 8th May, 1953, information had been conveyed through the Indian Consul-General in Lhasa regarding the replacement of Indian escorts at Gyantse and Yatung. They would also like to draw attention to the existing position in regard to Indian and Tibetan nationals and officials not being required to observe any passport and visa formalities. This practice has been observed on a reciprocal basis.

8. The Government of India are gravely concerned over the reported interference with the legitimate movement of their Trade Agent and his staff in Western Tibet and have already requested that the wireless communication facilities, which are so essential for the performance of his duties, along with other facilities to move to important trade marts, should be immediately restored to him.

9. The Government of India are willing to discuss with the Chinese Government all pending matters as soon as possible. Piecemeal consideration of separate problems does not lead to satisfactory solutions and, therefore, the Government of India suggest a consideration of all pending matters. A friendly settlement by negotiation will remove all possibility of such incidents in future. They would further strongly urge that, pending an amicable settlement of these issues by negotiation between the two countries, no action be taken to effect unilateral changes in their existing agencies and arrangements in Tibet, as such a course is likely to lead to a vacuum which both Governments wish to avoid. They would, therefore, request the Chinese Government to issue necessary instructions to this end to their local authorities.

To M.P. Koirala

15 August 1953

7- The Nepali Congress frequently charged India with treating Nepal as a dependency of hers like Sikkim. C.P.N. Singh, who was India's Ambassador to Nepal, 1949-52, was said to be often present at the meetings of the Nepali Cabinet, and criticized for meddling in the internal affairs of Nepal. When M.P. Koirala was appointed as Prime Minister in November 1951, B.P. Koirala accused C.P.N. Singh of trying to balance one leader against another. The interventions of the Indian police to restore law and order in 1951 were described by opposition groups as infringement of Nepal's sovereignty and independence. The Indian Military Mission, which was invited when B.P. Koirala was in the government, was interpreted as a device for suppression of political parties and gradual annexation of Nepal. As conditions worsened in 1953, a section of the Nepali Congress whipped up the anti-India campaign, with the Working Committee of the party calling up on India to withdraw her civilian advisers and the Military Mission in the interest of "healthy relations between India and Nepal." The Kosi project agreement also aroused intense bitterness in Nepal and its opponents accused the Government of bartering away Nepal's future.

8- The Indian Military Mission went to Nepal in February 1952. During its stay of just over a year, the Mission had introduced (1) uniformity in dress, (2) rational pay scales and (3) other basic reforms, apart from imparting training to 150 officers who would form the nucleus of future Army leadership. The number of generals was reduced to the minimum and hereditary right to rank was abolished. The barracks system was introduced and the troops had to undergo intensive training.