

Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru

Volume 24

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Gandhian India

30 January 1954

They were impressed by the tremendous unity amidst the diversity. Then we had dances by people from various parts of the country in a variety of dresses at the National Stadium. They had come from the borders of Burma and Tibet, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Goa, Bombay and the South. Every year we invite a few of the troupes to come and dance here. It was started last year in order to enable our guests as also the people of Delhi to get a complete picture of India and to understand one another and not think of our own little localities as the only places that count.

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George Roerich¹

4 December 1953

I should like you to meet George Roerich who is in Delhi at present and will probably stay here till Monday or Tuesday. He is the son of the well-known painter.² His brother is Svetoslav Roerich,³ who is a painter and who married Devika Rani.⁴ George is a linguist and known Tibetan very well. Also Chinese, Mongolian, Sanskrit and a number of European languages. He has translated several books from Tibetan. And I think the

¹ Note to T.N. Kaul, Joint Secretary, MEA, 4 December 1953. JN Collection. A copy of this note was also sent to N.R. Pillai, the Secretary General of the Ministry of External Affairs.

² Nicholas Konstantin Roerich.

³ Famous painter, married Devika Rani and settled down in India.

⁴ Famous film actress and producer.

Calcutta University has published some of them. He finished a big trilingual dictionary, some years ago, during war time, Tibetan-Sanskrit-English. This has not been published because it is a big task and no published is prepared to take it up.

2. Roerichs were a white Russian family which migrated at the time of the Probably you have seen some of his paintings. There is a Roerich Museum in New York.⁵ These people were attracted towards Buddhism, Lamaism etc. and travelled a good deal in Central Asia, Tibet, Mongolia etc.⁶ They used to live in the Kulu Valley,⁷ where I was their guest in 1942. Now they have split up and George lives at Kalimpong.

3. They tried to go back to Russia some years ago, and, in fact, got permission to do so, but then some difficulty intervened. They are not of the normal White Russian variety and are quite friendly to the present regime in Russia even through we may not like some aspects of it. I suppose it is a kind of nationalist pride in the greatness of Russia.

4. Our Intelligence has looked upon them with some slight suspicion although they have never had anything to get hold of. In fact, every foreigner in Kalimpong is the object of some suspicion, and usually with reason.

5. When I went to Kalimpong, George Roerich put forward some scheme of teaching Tibetan to Indian students and Sanskrit to Tibetans who are coming over and wanted to learn it. I referred him to Visva Bharati and Calcutta University. Our Ministry also had some correspondence I think. Visva Bharati is still, I believe, considering that scheme. The Calcutta University has some contacts with him and some scholars have gone to Kalimpong to learn Tibetan from him. He is also teaching Sanskrit to some people from Tibet who have come over. I think he has a good

⁵ The International Art Centre, also known as Roerich Museum, containing paintings and collections of Nicholas Roerich was set up in 1924.

⁶ Nicholas Roerich visited the Himalayas and the Central Asian regions four times between 1923 and 1935.

⁷ In fact, Nicholas Roerich died in Kulu in 1947.

collection of Tibetan manuscripts. Recently he translated a history of Buddhism from the Tibetan to English.

6. It struck me that we should give a few scholarships to students to learn Tibetan that is, not merely the spoken language but even the literary language.

7. I should like you to meet Roerich and have a general talk with him about conditions in Tibet etc. He is an interesting person, full of information about odd things. His general report to me has been that things are very calm in Tibet and both the people and the Lama hierarchy have adjusted themselves to the new order. This is chiefly so because the Chinese have refrained from interfering in anything. The Tibetans are, therefore, not so apprehensive as they used to be. In fact, many Tibetans had come to India with their belongings, books and manuscripts back as they thought conditions were stable. Roerich told me something that was surprising. The Chinese Government have not only fully recognized the Tibetan hierarchy, including nobles etc., but they actually create nobles now and give high titles, equivalent to Princes and the like under the seal of Mao Tse-tung.

8. Another interesting story he told me was that the Chinese were somewhat surprised to meet some eminent scholars in Tibet who, from the point of view of Buddhism, discussed with some knowledge dialectical materialism with them, which according to them was not unlike Buddhist Philosophy.

9. I should like you to meet him to gain some information about conditions in Tibet, the Dalai Lama, the Panchen Lama etc.⁸

⁸ Panchen Lama 10th incarnation (1935-1989); Tibetan spiritual leader, second in importance to the Dalai Lama. A protégé of the Chinese, the 10th Panchen Lama was not universally recognised. When the Dalai Lama left Tibet in 1959, the Panchen Lama was deputed by the Chinese to take over, but was stripped of his power in 1964 for refusing to denounce the Dalai Lama. He did not appear again in public until 1978.

10. He told me that Kalimpong is becoming a big centre of the Tibetan trade. He saw hundreds of packed horses carrying sewing machines to Tibet.

11. Also I want you to maintain some contact with him in case we might use him for language studies and the like. It might be worth exploring how much it would cost to get his big Tibetan-Sanskrit-English dictionary published.

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A Realistic Approach to Problems

24 December 1953

Then, Mr. Mookerjee referred to foreign experts. Naturally, I cannot discuss the question of any individual expert, good or bad. But I do not understand this business, he objects not to foreign experts but to a particular nationality of a foreign expert. Obviously he does not object to foreign experts as such. It is quite clear that we want to develop our industries, our technique, our sciences. We want to develop them. Obviously, in developing them we want expert guidance. We may conceivably develop without expert guidance too; but only you will take ten times as much time; instead of two years, we would take fifteen or twenty years for the same. It is obvious that every country has done it too. We want the best technical advice possible. Let there be no mistake about it. It is not patriotism or nationalism that counts in this matter. If we want a technical expert from abroad, we ought to get him from abroad – it does not matter whether your man is thrown out of his job or not. We cannot get a second-rate man for doing a first-rate job. Technically considered, you may have, although it is not good, a second-rate administrator, but you just cannot do it if you want a second-rate technical man to do a first-rate technical job. It would not be done, simply.

Therefore, we must have the very best men – we may make a mistake in choosing a person. But the sooner we get high-class technical experts, the sooner we can ask them to start the plants. It is part of their business to train our people, and it is not a question of 'lecture' training, but training by experience in doing big jobs.

We have undertaken in this country some of the biggest jobs that are being done in the world. There are the river valley projects. Some honourable Members have seen them, and often they have criticized them. That criticism may be right or wrong in a particular matter, but the fact of the matter is that they are magnificent jobs magnificently done, taken as a whole. Anybody who sees them realizes it. It is not a question of argument. Anybody who sees them, whether he comes from any part of India, or from Russia or China, realizes that it is a magnificent job magnificently done, in spite of all the mistakes that have been committed. Then, to do big things, we have to look and consider them in a big way and remove all trivial failings. You remember the bigness of the job. You do not do a big job in a pettifogging way. So, we will not entrust them to any persons who are not absolutely top-ranking. In that particular respect, from the point of view of experience, I am sure even in the present generation our engineers are very good; they have been exceedingly good; they are improving, that is to say, they are getting experience of these big jobs and they can do the biggest job, I am quite sure, after a few year' time. But, for the present, it does help us to have good experts from abroad. From the point of view of finance, sometimes it does not matter what you pay him, because he saves you so much. So, the question of foreign experts must be viewed in that light...

Now, Dr. Lanka Sundaram gave some facts which rather surprised me.⁹ I do not know where his information comes from about the happenings on

⁹ During the debate Lanka Sundaram (Independent) referred to the news about "percolation" of the Chinese troops on the Indo-Tibetan border across various passes. He claimed that 60,000 to 100,000 Chinese troops were poised across the Himalayan border, and expressed concern over the Government's inadequate security measures. He

the Indo-Tibetan border. He said that 100,000 or, I forget 50,000, troops are concentrated there. I have a few sources of information too, but I have not got that information. I should be very happy if Dr.Lanka Sundaram will supply me with some information on that subject so that I can verify it. I am in intimate touch this way and that way on the border, on both sides, and those figures which he mentioned, so far as I am concerned are completely wrong, and far out from truth. I would like to say further that in a way, in the way in which with China which are going to take place in the course of the next week in Peking, some connection between them and the recent development in regard to the proposals for US military aid to Pakistan.¹⁰

It was not your intention, I know, but Members might have thought so. As a matter of fact this question of our talks in Peking has been under correspondence for the last many, many months, and ultimately, I should think, about three months back, we suggested to the Chinese Government that we would like to have some talks with them and that we could have them either in Delhi or in Peking. Thereupon they agreed to Peking. We asked our Ambassador to come here. We have had talks with our Ambassador and now he has gone back; and one or two other officials of our Foreign Office are also going there. I think that before this year is out the talks will begin. But they have no relation to any other problem, except these problems in regard to Tibetan trade, pilgrimage and such like problems.

Dr.Lanka Sundaram also referred to some maps and Chinese claims to suzerainty, and the McMahon Line and all that. I cannot speak for the Chinese Government, of course, what they may have in their minds or

also pointed out India's special responsibility towards Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal and Tibet, and referred to the existence of a note in the External Affairs Ministry in which it was mentioned that China was disinclined to accept the McMahon Line. He moved an amendment pressing for the strengthening of the national defence. The amendment was later withdrawn.

¹⁰ Lanka Sundaram said here: "It was not my intention."

not. But I know what has happened in the course of the last two or three years. Repeatedly we have discussed with them these problems, in regard to Tibet especially, because India has some special interests in Tibet, trade, pilgrimage, etc. At no time has any question been raised by them or by anybody about frontier problems. This House knows very well that I have declared here in answer to question, in foreign affairs debates, repeatedly that so far as we are concerned, there is nothing to discuss about the frontier. The frontier is there; the McMahon Line is there. We have nothing to discuss with anybody, with the Chinese Government or any other Government about it. There it remains. The question does not arise. So our people have gone there not to discuss the frontier problem. It is not an issue at all to be discussed.

Dr.Lanka Sundaram also referred to some leaflet of the External Affairs Ministry in which something was said about an undefined border. Now I speak from memory; but, so far as I remember, that refers to the border with Burma. Especially in the Naga territory, there is an area which is not really defined and there have been vague talks with the Burmese Government. So far as the McMahon Line is concerned it was fixed long ago. It is true that having fixed it on the map, it is not fixed in the sense of putting down pillars and the like, there may occasionally be some doubt.¹¹

I cannot say anything about that, though it is possible...

Maybe. Well, since the days of the Constituent Assembly our Historical Division has given a great deal of thought to these matters and we know much more about it and this question has not troubled us at all. But as I said, there is a certain undefined area as between Burma and India and there were various proposals too for not merely defining it but also slight

¹¹ Lanka Sundaram interrupted: "The memorandum I quoted was from Mr. Ramadhyani and the Comment was of our External Affairs Ministry to the memorandum. This was submitted to the Constituent Assembly and dealt with the Tibet-Assam border and the Burma border."

exchange of territory to adjust things. But they have remained where they were...

I entirely agree with Honourable Members who say that we should not be dependent upon other countries. Of course, nobody can be utterly and absolutely, hundred per cent independent. Some dependence for something remains and should remain: there is no harm in it. But you must not be dependent to the extent of being enfeebled or unable to function properly because of that dependence. It takes time to build these things up, to build industry up. If you look to other countries, whatever they are, you will see that they took a mighty long time to reach the level they have done now. And I think that the progress we have made in this matter during the last five or six years is very far from negligible.

One thing I should like to say. Mr. Deshpande repeatedly referred to our going about with a begging bowl asking for aid of American or some other countries. At no time has any of us ever gone with a begging bowl to any country, I want to make this perfectly clear, and at no time are we going to do it hereafter. We welcome aid on honourable terms, because it helps us to speed our process of change to industrialization, whatever it is. But, normally speaking, aid has come to us: the initiative even has been on the other side. We have

Welcomed that; we have discussed it and we have agreed or disagreed, as the regard to a particular matter. There is no question of 'begging-bowl attitude' which is bad for the giver and for the taker.

Also, I did not say that if Pakistan takes military aid that makes war inevitable. I made no such rash suggestion. What I said was that this kind of thing hampers peace. It comes in the way of peace: it is a factor against peace. It is not by itself so important as to bring war or peace, there are many factors which ultimately govern events.

I think, Sir, that I have dealt with most of the important points that were raised in this debate. I agree entirely with the hope expressed by many honourable Member about the unity of the country and the consolidation of the country. That is obvious. That is our purpose and that should be

our effort. Anyhow, apart from any crisis that might arise we have to do that. I do not want this House or the country to imagine on account of the various developments that have taken place, which should make us wary that something is happening which should create any kind of fright or panic. We have to be wary, we have to be vigilant and we have to be united and work together. And in working together, ultimately, it is not so much the number of armed soldiers that counts....

I am grateful to the House, Sir, for the indulgence with which it has received my motion.

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The Indo-Tibetan Frontier Issue¹²

24 December 1953

Mr. Chairman, I shall only endeavour to say a few words in regard to some of the points raised in the course of the debate.¹³ An honourable Member, Mr. C.G.K. Reddy, said many things which to some extent answer themselves, because he has the habit, in the course of a few sentences, of contradicting himself many times. It is not really necessary for me to add anything in reply to that bundle of contradictions, but I do wish to understand what is meant by the phrase "national foreign policy" which is being bandied about. I am all for a national foreign policy. I would gladly consult as many people and as many groups as possible and also the leaders of groups, whenever an opportunity arises. But first of all a national foreign policy must necessarily mean some measure of agreement on that policy, on the broad principles of that policy. Of

¹² Reply to a debate in the Council of States, 24 December 1953. Parliamentary Debates (Council of States), Official Report, Vol. V, Nos. 18-25, 16 to 24 December 1953, cols. 3590-3599.

¹³ Nehru's speech while moving the motion on foreign affairs in the Council of States is not printed. The speech was on the same lines he spoke in the House of the People on 23 December 1953.

course, consultations there may be. I find in the honourable Mr. Reddy's speech a very great gap between his way of thinking and mine on this question. Does a nation lie somewhere in between the honourable Mr. Reddy and myself, and where does it lie? Do we go half way or if I give up something...¹⁴

I wish to understand, because here, from the very speech that the honourable Mr. Reddy made, probably there is not much agreement on the national foreign policy. How does one get it? There are certain matters and certain emergencies when there is a large measure of agreement, because the smaller points are out of the way. That is true. I suppose personally, if I may say so, that the policy that the Government have been following by and large – I am not referring to details – is what I would call very much a national foreign policy, which, I do submit, has received a measure of support from the people of this country which hardly any country can show in regard to its foreign policy. However, we should remain in touch with others in regard to the leaders of other groups. I certainly welcome that, and, to some extent, I will try to give effect to that.

Then the honourable Mr. Reddy talked a great deal about something, about a wave of hysteria encouraged by me and my colleagues. In particular, he referred to some circular issued by – presumably he referred to – the All India Congress Committee.¹⁵ Now, I should have thought that the honourable Mr. Reddy perhaps is more excited about this matter than I am. Certainly, I am not and let there be no mistake about it. Far from hysteria, I deprecate hysteria at any time, but it is true that the All India Congress Committee issued some kind of a circular. I might confess here that I have not seen that circular, as yet. But, leaving that aside, the position is – not the wording of it – the idea of it was at my instance, I admit that. So far as I know, that circular contained some

¹⁴ C.G.K. Reddy interjected: "I do not ask him to consult me and I don't think he will condescend to do so."

¹⁵ See ante, pp.

advice about holding meetings to consider this problem, not processions and the like – I am not a believer in processions – the whole point being that public opinion should be informed so that it may not merely go astray by listening to rumours and other things and it may be positively informed about the very important developments. That is the function of every intelligent party, to inform public opinion according to its own way of looking at things about these developments. It depends how that is done – it may do it the wrong way or the right way. We happen to be a very live and dynamic party and we approach the public and don't sit at home.¹⁶

I hope so. I was not present at that meeting. I am told that it was a very good meeting and very good speeches were delivered. I was not present to here every word but my colleagues were there and they reported to me that it was one of the best meetings that Delhi had where speeches were moderate and very good.

He also said, I mean the honourable Mr. Reddy, I did not quite get his words – something about our Consul in Sinkiang being withdrawn. I don't quite know if the honourable Mr. Reddy knows anything about recent history. In fact some changes have taken place in the last two years. Some major changes have taken place there. As a result of those changes, which have nothing to do with India at the moment – leaving that out – internally there many things have happened. It is perfectly true our Consul went there – I speak from memory – probably in 1948, may be even later, in 1949. But when these changes, revolutionary changes took place there, it is perfectly true that the Chinese Government, when they came to Tibet, told us that they intended, that they wanted to treat Sinkiang as a closed area. They told other State Government, too. Well, nothing happened. Our Consul remained there. But because of those changes, because of many factors – among them being what happened in Kashmir – the trade ceased. Sinkiang was important to us, or rather

¹⁶ C.G.K. Reddy here asked whether the meeting held in Delhi was in line with the advice that Nehru had given.

Kashgar. Let us use the word Kashgar and not Sinkiang. Kashgar is important to us as a trade route. The trade went over the Karakoram, passed through Ladakh and Leh on to Kashmir. Various factors, including developments in Kashmir led to the stoppage of that trade. While on the one hand the Chinese Government said that they wanted to treat that area as a closed area and did not wish to encourage foreign missions there, on the other hand, this trade stopped. The result was, our Consul remained there for some time, till recently. But the Indian merchants there, the trade having stopped, gradually disappeared, and so far as I know there is hardly a single Indian merchant left there – may be there are one or two. And so our Consul said, “I am doing no work at all. There is now no work to be done.” So we advised him to come away and he did come away. There is some property, but that is not the point. But it is a fact that the Consul, if I may say so, ceased to function, particularly, if you like, because of certain developments in Tibet and, again if you like – because of the Chinese State absorbing Tibet practically, not merely theoretically. This question of Tibet was referred to, I believe by the honourable Dr. Kunzru also. Well, I do not know what was expected or what is expected of us to be done in Tibet – I would say with a certain acquaintance with the position of Tibet during the last, let us say, 50 or 60 years or so that at no stage in Tibet’s history, to my knowledge – and I have studied it fairly carefully – was the suzerainty of China denied. Sometimes some Tibetan groups denied it. But no foreign country at any time ever denied the suzerainty of China over Tibet over the last many, many generations. That is the position. There is no doubt about it. Some people want us to go out on a kind of crusade for the independence of Tibet or for proclaiming something which in international law, or in the position then existing, had not been put forward by anybody.¹⁷

¹⁷ Devaprasad Ghosh interrupted to ask whether the Government of India had sent a note of protest to the Chinese Government.

We sent many notes – not one.¹⁸ We are constantly sending notes. What is the protest about? I don't know what he means by protest. We are sending many notes, but at no time did we in any way challenge the suzerainty of China there. We have not, because for the last so many years, when the British Government was here, they had recognized the suzerainty of China over Tibet. As long as 50 or 60 years back, when the British were rather dominant in Tibet, even in those days, and subsequently in 1911 or thereabout, when talks took place between the representatives of China, Tibet and India, even then the suzerainty of China was recognized. At every stage it was recognized. But the British Government in those days, and we subsequently for a short time, recognized the autonomy of Tibet under China. Now, if that was so, if it is the practical aspect of the question, it is not clear to me how we can go about intervening in Tibet either constitutionally or in any other way. I just do not understand.¹⁹

I am not aware of the massing of troops across the border Perhaps the honourable Mr. Reddy has greater sources of knowledge. I really do not know. We have no such sources. I do not pretend to have complete knowledge of what is happening in every part of Tibet. It is difficult. We have not got our own representative nor do the newspapers report these things, so that it is difficult to know all about these things. Much of the news that is published in the papers comes from Kalimpong, and Kalimpong contains many people who send news which is of most

¹⁸ When on 21 October 1950, the Government of India drew the attention of the Government of China to the harmful effects of the latter resorting to military action to "liberate" Tibet, as such action might lead to the postponement of the admission of the People's Government of China to the United Nations and to unrest on India's borders, it received a reply criticizing the Government of India" as having been affected by foreign influences hostile to China in Tibet."

¹⁹ C.G.K. Reddy interrupted here: "Prime Minister himself had protested against the complete subjugation of Tibet and that some people had been talking about it. I only mentioned Tibet regarding the massing of troops across the border and asked him whether it was not a geographical compulsion.

unreliable variety. It is very frequently, I think, completely unreliable and such news should not be accepted at all. I cannot give any exact figures but I am quite sure in my mind that there is no massing of troops anywhere – North, South, West or East – anywhere. In fact, my own information is that such troops as were there have been lessened for the simple reason that it is very difficult to feed them. Tibet is a most inhospitable country and is a most difficult country to live in, to cross over, to travel over – for anything.²⁰

Tibet is part of the Chinese State and the Chinese State can send its troops anywhere it likes within its boundaries. The honourable Member seems to live in a world which has no relation to reality of today. I just do not understand this question. People talk about foreign policy. Let us know something, the A B C about these things.

The honourable Member asks if China has got troops in Tibet. Of course, China has kept troops there. Certainly they have troops there. I was telling you that actually, so far as my knowledge goes – it is not absolutely accurate as far as the numbers are concerned – the number of troops they had there originally had to be lessened; troops had to be withdrawn because of difficulties of feeding them there. The troops had to be fed and they could not be fed from the soil. Partly the feed had to come from China and it is very difficult to sent food across the Gobi desert and through a good bit of China.

I have no doubt – again I cannot give exact information, but I have no doubt – that airfields are being constructed in other parts of Tibet. It is a very natural thing to construct airfields. You may not like it. You may be slighted as far as that is concerned – it is another matter - but the only way of getting across to Tibet, as is the only way of getting across to many of our North Eastern Frontier areas, is by air. Air traffic has got to be developed. We are building airfields in most of our North-Eastern

²⁰ Deveprasad Ghosh asked whether Tibet was still under effective Chinese occupation.

Frontier areas wherever we can and we are getting helicopters to go there. That is the only way.

The airfields can be used naturally for offensive purposes as well as for defensive purposes and also for trade and for normal traffic. All these things may happen. I am no prophet and I cannot see into the future as to how airfields can be used but if there is any suspicion that there are some preparations being made in Tibet for some kind of invasion of India, some kind of attack on India, I think that is completely mistaken and I think there is no basis for it. I cannot say what the distant future may hold, but I do not hold from my own point of view, and practically I am voicing the opinion of many others, that there is the least chance of even an attempt at such an invasion of India, and I think, apart from any uncertain factors, the mere factors of geography and various other factors make that exceedingly difficult, and then, in the final analysis, if any such thing takes place, we shall resist it. Why shout about it and why get afraid of it? I do not understand this outlook. But, whatever may happen in the rest of the world, war or no war, this question of our Himalayan border being crossed is exceedingly unlikely. If something happens and an aeroplane comes and throws an atomic weapon on us, well, that depends on our policy rather than on anything else, on our friendship or hostility to other countries not other factors. Nobody can gamble with the future. But our relations with the Chinese State at the present moment are friendly. We do not agree with them in many matters and they do not agree with us on many matters, but our relations are friendly, and in the course of the next few days, possibly within the next week, talks will begin in Peking. These talks relate chiefly to certain special rights that have developed in the way of trade, etc., the pilgrimage that we have developed and some things relating to posts and telegraphs. Not one of them really is of vital importance.

I think the honourable Dr. Kunzru mentioned the question of the frontier. So far as we are concerned no question about our frontier arises and we have nothing to do with it. We have got a frontier which we know well,

which is marked there and there the matter ends. We are not going to discuss it with anybody and we do not propose to admit anybody's right to come across that frontier except in a friendly way.²¹

Nepal, the honourable Member knows, is an independent country and I cannot supply information about it except to say that we have an Ambassador there and some other people there helping the Nepal Government. Some officers are lent. We have got at present a small number of our troops to train their air force, about a couple of a hundred, I think. I cannot give you exact information, but, broadly speaking, politically, Nepal has been, in the last few months, in a somewhat fluid state, not in a very satisfactory state, and we have always had difficulties to face. We do not wish to intervene in the affairs, at the same time we are very much concerned of course with the stability and peaceful progress of Nepal and we have given advice from time to time when asked for. We have offered our help in the shape of experienced officers, though not many. A few have gone. The King of Nepal meanwhile fell seriously ill and the King was advised to go to Switzerland for treatment. He went there. He is much better now. He is convalescing and it is possible that he may be back within the next ten days or may be a fortnight. I hope that on his return we will see some further developments there towards stability. But the point of the honourable Dr. Kunzru was probably in reference to the stories about infiltration from Tibet, etc. I cannot give any precise answer to that. All I can say is that if there is any, it can be only on a small scale. It is nothing. It is nothing. It is not on a big scale. Obviously, I cannot say whether a few persons have come across – what they do in more or less unknown territory across the border – but it is not, to my knowledge on any substantial scale.

That is all I have to say. I do not wish to take up more of the time of the House except to express my gratification at the general way honourable Members have expressed themselves and especially the hope they have

²¹ H.N.Kunzru said that he asked for information about Nepal and not about the North Eastern frontier.

expressed that if new difficulties come to us we shall face them with unity and courage.

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Friendly Policy towards China²²

25 October 1953

I agree with Mr. Panikkar's general approach in this matter. For Mr. Sinha²³ to talk-about China's designs itself indicates that he is not taking quite an objective view of the situation but has started with certain presumptions. I do not rule out the possibility of such developments in Tibet, on our border or elsewhere. But we must take a balanced view.²⁴

2. We cannot support feudal elements in Tibet, indeed we cannot interfere in Tibet. Having come to that conclusion, we should abide by it and not pine for a different policy, which anyhow is totally outside our reach.

3. On our border tracts, we should not interfere with local customs, etc., but gently we should encourage liberal forces without siding too much with any group or party. In the main, we should develop these areas. The first thing to be done is development of communications.

²² Note to Secretary-General, Foreign Secretary and Joint Secretary T.N. Kaul, 25 October 1953. JN Collection.

²³ S. Sinha, who was the Officer in charge of the Indian Mission in Tibet in 1950, was Officer on Special Duty in the Ministry of External Affairs at this time.

²⁴ Sinha had put up a note with a heading, "Chinese Designs on the North East Frontier of India" which drew attention to various possible dangers in the situation. This note was sent to K.M. Panikkar for his comments. Panikkar's views were: that the issue was not one of Chinese, or Chinese-inspired military adventure against the border of India. It was a question of developing settled conditions within India's border, in area where the administrative position was weak and the political position was only growing. He suggested a policy of firm friendship for the people of the area, of non-interference in their social life, of making available to them the advantages of modern developments and of taking advantage of the contradictions of Chinese policy in Tibet.

4. As for our frontier, it is our well-declared policy that the line is a settled one and not open to argument or discussion, except perhaps with regard to minor tracts here and there which might be doubtful. I cannot go into people's minds, much less into the Chinese mind, but I can judge from circumstances. It is completely impracticable for the Chinese Government to think of anything in the nature of invasion of India. Therefore I rule it out. It is not impossible for some infiltration to create local trouble. We must guard against that.

5. There is danger in Nepal, but this too is due to internal chaotic conditions than to outside interference. As a matter of fact, the outside interference that is troubling us is American and not Chinese.

6. We must realize fully that our policy in regard to China is one of friendliness and co-existence, allied with firmness in regard to any interference with our basic rights. Ultimately the basic right is the preservation of the frontier. There are also some other rights and customs, which are not very controversial. We shall not give up any basic right. For the rest, we shall deal with the Chinese in a friendly manner. It is important today, and even more so in the long future, that India and China should have friendly relations and not have a dangerous frontier. The best way to ensure this on our side is to develop the border regions on this side not only in the sense of roads, etc. but in the sense of winning people there to the conception of India.

7. Mr. Sinha's references to an invasion of Nepal appear to me to indicate much too imaginative an approach. Such an approach vitiates his argument and the conclusions he comes to.

8. It is perfectly true that the post of Political Officer in Sikkim is of importance. That officer must clearly understand our policy not only in the region of the frontier and in Tibet but in its wider aspect all over the world.

9. It appears that Mr. Sinha does not appreciate our policy fully. He should be enlightened.

The Beijing Conference²⁵

3 December 1953

I agree generally with this not for the discussions at the Peking Conference.²⁶

2. I agree about the attitude we should take up in regard to the frontier. We should not raise this question. If the Chinese raise it, we should express our surprise and point out that this is a settled issue. Further, that during the last two years or so, when reference was frequently made about Indo-Chinese or Indo-Tibetan problems, there has never been any reference to this frontier issue and it is surprising that this should be brought up now. Our delegation cannot discuss it.

3. We should avoid walking out unless the Chinese insist on taking up this question.²⁷ If such an eventuality occurs, the matter will no doubt be referred to us.

4. Regarding the village of Minsar in Western Tibet, which has belonged to the Kashmir State, it is clear that we shall have to give it up, if this question is raised. We need not raise it. If it is raised, we should say that we recognize the strength of the Chinese contention and we are prepared to consider it and recommend it. But the matter will have to be referred to the Kashmir Government. It can of course be referred by telegram through us. The point is that we should not come to a final agreement without gaining the formal assent of the Kashmir Government.

²⁵ Note to the Secretary General, 3 December 1953. JN Collection.

²⁶ This note presented the main points that were to arise during that were to arise during the discussions at the Beijing Conference: 1. the question of India's frontier with Tibet: Indo-Tibetan trade and trade agencies, 3. Freedom of movement of Indian and Tibetan traders and pilgrims, 4. passports and visas, 5. telegraph, post office and hospitals 6. security guards and escorts and 7. Special position of Bhutan.

²⁷ K.M. Panikkar had suggested in his note on the proposed Beijing Conference that if China insisted on reopening the whole issues of the frontier, the Indian delegation could walk out of the conference and break off the negotiations.

5. There are references in the note to certain disputed areas in Ladakh Hunza, etc. I imagine that some of these are in the Pakistan-occupied territory, like Hunza. If so, we can hardly discuss these with them and we can point out that all this area is under dispute with Pakistan.

6. Regarding trade, I agree with the Commerce Ministry that we should not restrict trade between India and Tibet. Tibet is our natural market and we should develop it normally.

7. As regards prohibited articles, this prohibition should generally continue. But we might be a little more generous in regard to petrol, etc. A few thousand gallons does not make any difference to us, nor does it make any great difference on the other side from the military points of view. But, as a bargaining counter, we might agree to relax our rules to a small extent in regard to POL.

8. The question of free transit of foreign goods from India can hardly arise, except perhaps in theory, as China hardly purchases foreign goods. It would be interesting if China claimed the right under the Barcelona Convention, of 1921. That itself would slightly weaken China's attempt to bypass or reject old conventions and customs. Anyway, it is clear that it is physically impossible for us to use the Sikkim route to any large extent.

9. I do not know that it will serve any useful purpose for us to ask for the restoration of the old trade route between Sinkiang and Kashmir. That route passes through territory held by Pakistan. It is exceedingly unlikely that we shall get back this territory. However, there is no harm in mentioning this.

10. I agree with what is said about our trade agencies. Gertok is important. Yatung especially, and, to some extent, Gyantse are likely to become more important as trade between India and Tibet increases. They are on the main route. Therefore, it is eminently reasonable that we should have some trade agents there or at least at Yatung.

11. If Bhutan is mentioned in any way, we should make it perfectly clear that External Affairs of Bhutan are under our direct guidance. We should not raise this question. But inferentially, this fact should be brought out

and further that the Chinese will have to deal with us in regard to External Affairs relating to Bhutan.

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Letters to Chief Ministers

6 December 1953

15. There is, however a growing feeling in France that their colonial policies, especially in Indo-China, will not succeed.²⁸ There has even been some kind of vague approach made for a negotiated peace with Ho Chi Minh. France would probably have got out of the Indo-Chinese war long ago simply because it could not shoulder the burden. But the USA, in view of their larger policies will not permit France to walk out.²⁹

16. To come back to India. Lucknow has been very much in the news because of the student problem and the conflict of the students with the State authorities. I have previously written to you how greatly concerned I am about our students. I do think that large numbers of them are fine material, if well tackled and dealt with. But something has gone absolutely wrong in our educational system and the university authorities seem to be quite incapable of controlling their students or winning them over to a measure of cooperation. We could allot blame as we like to the students or to the university authorities or to others; but that does not solve the problem. Discipline. It is a tragedy to see bright young lives

²⁸ During the debate in the French National Assembly on 23 and 27-28 October, M.Giovoni, a Communist member, described the French policy in Indo-China as "unconstitutional, contrary to the national interest, ruinous and hopeless." And accused the Government of "selling French blood for dollars." Some other members of the Opposition also urged that Vietnam should be declared an independent country despite Bao Dai's opposition.

²⁹ On 30 September, the United States agreed to give \$385 million, in addition to the \$400 million already allotted to France, to meet the war expenses in Indo-China. The joint communiqué spoke of France's "heroic efforts" to "stem Communist penetration in South East Asia."

being wasted in this way and becoming more and more frustrated.

17. The present tragedy in the North East Frontier Agency, not far from our Tibet border, has suddenly made the public aware of the difficult problems we face in these regions. A platoon of the Assam Rifles was ambushed and attacked and practically the whole party was killed. We have taken immediate measures and adequate forces have been despatched by the land route. Communications are so bad that it takes nearly three weeks to get there. Therefore, we have also sent some paratroopers by air and other action by air will be taken if necessary.