

Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru

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1. Chinese Maps of the Frontier with India¹

You know that, in Chinese maps, quite a good part of Assam is shown as if it belonged to Tibet. Also, a bit of the UP, bordering on Tibet. Some two or three years ago, we drew the attention of the Chinese Government to this. Their reply was that these maps were old maps from Chiang Kai-shek's² time and that they had had no time to revise them. Recently, a new set of maps has been printed. They are exactly as the old ones except for a note that they are reproductions of the old maps.

2- We had decided previously not to raise the question of our frontier with China because, so far as we were concerned, there was no dispute. The Tibet frontier ran along the Mac-Mahon Line and we consider it a firm frontier.³ I stated this more than once in Parliament.⁴

3. Even when I went to China, I casually mentioned Chinese maps to Chou En-lai and, so far as I remember, he said something about the maps being old and that we can settle frontier questions in a friendly way later.⁵ In effect, therefore, China never clearly accepted our frontier as it is. All that they have said is that the old maps are not reliable. We have stated to them

¹ Note to V.K. Krishna Menon 6 May 1956. JN Collection.

² Head of the Kuomintang, the Chinese Nationalist People's Party, which ruled China since 1926. Chiang Kai-shek withdrew to Taiwan after military defeat of his party by the Communists and proclamation of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

³ See *Selected Works* (second series), Vol. 15 Part 1, p. 442.

⁴ For Nehru's answer to a question in Parliament, 20 November 1950, see *Selected Works* (second series), Vol. 15 Part II, p. 348.

⁵ See the minutes of Nehru's talks with the Chinese Prime Minister, Chou En-lai, in Beijing on 20 October 1954, in *Selected Works* (second series), Vol. 27, pp. 17, 19-20 and 81-82.

and in Parliament that our frontier is as given in our maps.

4. At the time of the agreement with China about Tibetan questions,⁶ it was taken for granted by us that all pending questions between India and China had been settled.⁷ In some of our communications too, stress was laid on this. But, China has never admitted this clearly though they did not deny it either.

5. I find that the Russian maps (and we have good Soviet atlases which were given to us in Moscow)⁸ also reproduce the Chinese maps in regard to the Indian border and show a part of India as being in Tibet.

6. Every year, there are petty incidents on our UP-Tibet border. Some Chinese soldiers come across up to ten or fifteen miles or even more. There has been no actual conflict but there has been some friction. They have ultimately withdrawn. We have small check-posts here and there. Our communications are bad and it takes quite a long time for our people to reach the UP- Tibet frontier. Quite recently, there was another incident there.⁹

7. As a matter of fact, long before the Chinese came to Tibet,¹⁰ there used to be such incidents. The local Tibetan Governor would send a group of persons to a village across the border and even collect some taxes. It took weeks and months for any of our people to reach there. By that time, the Tibetans had retired. I think, something like this happened even in British times.

8. The question arises as to what we should do in these circumstances. When

⁶ Under an agreement on trade and intercourse between Tibet and India, signed by China and India in Beijing on 29 April 1954, India gave up all the extra-territorial rights enjoyed by the British Government of India in Tibet. See *Selected Works* (second series), Vol. 25, pp. 468-469.

⁷ See *Selected Works* (second series), Vol. 26, pp. 482 and 558.

⁸ When Nehru visited the Soviet Union in June 1955.

⁹ According to the Commander of the Border Security Force at Nilang, close to the source of the Ganges at Gangotri, twelve Chinese soldiers including one officer were seen half a mile east of Nilang on 28 April 1956.

¹⁰ Chinese troops entered Tibet in October 1950. The Chinese authorities had declared on 1 January 1950 that Tibet's liberation was the basic mission of the People's Liberation Army.

an actual incursion like this has taken place into our territory, we have, of course, protested in Peking. We did this only a few days ago.¹¹ But, should we take any other action? That is, should we definitely raise the question of the frontier with the Chinese Government? This frontier is not clearly demarcated, and some doubt may arise about some point along it. The question is not, however, about some doubtful points but rather about a much wider territory which the Chinese maps show.

9. On the Tibetan side, roads and airports are being built. That is, I think, natural because the Chinese wish to develop Tibet and to improve communications. This does not necessarily mean any hostile or aggressive intention against India, but this, taken together with occasional petty raids and the maps which continue as they were, does produce a sense of disquiet.

10. I mentioned this matter to our Ambassador in Peking when he was here recently. He seemed to think that we should bide our time and not take any active step.

11. I should like this question to be considered more fully amongst ourselves.

Countering Chinese Moves on the Frontier¹²

These are rather old reports which I had not seen previously. Since these reports were received, there have been rumours about fairly widespread uprisings in Tibet against the Chinese, which were bombed and crushed by the Chinese authorities.¹³ It is difficult to say how far these reports are

¹¹ Expressing their "surprises and regret" at the Chinese incursion on 28 April, the Government of India, in a note given to the Chinese Counsellor in New Delhi on 2 May, stated that Nilang and the area right up to Tsang Chokla pass was clearly within the Indian territory.

¹² Note to S. Dutt, Foreign Secretary, and T.N. Kaul, Joint Secretary, MEA, 12 May 1956. JN Collection.

¹³ According to reports published in the Indian press in the first week of May, a serious uprising had occurred two months earlier among the Golok tribesmen of eastern Tibet. The tribesmen were stated to have massacred an entire Chinese garrison of 800-900 men, leading to retaliatory Chinese military action in which a number of Golok villages were reported to have been bombed with heavy civilian casualties.

correct. Probably, there is some exaggeration in them but, at the same time, there is also some measure of truth.

2. The building of roads and air strips by the Chinese in Tibet appears to me to be a natural development from the Chinese point of view. In order to hold and develop Tibet, they must have these communications.

3. It is true that roads right up to our border and air strips near our border create a new situation for us, which we must bear in mind. I rule out any kind of physical or aerial attack on India for a considerable time to come at least. So far as infiltration etc., are concerned, they have to be met by other means.

Proper check posts on the border and a certain vigilance right along the border, development of communications on our side and general economic and like development of our areas which, of course, is rather a long term programme.

4. What worries me a little is the persistence of the Chinese maps indicating parts of our territory as being in the Chinese State.¹⁴ I think that we shall have to take up this matter some time or other. We can consider this separately. In this connection, however, I think that we should take up with the Soviet Government, their maps of this border area, which appear to be a copy of the Chinese maps.

5. From a military point of view, we can do little except

- (1) check posts at all suitable points on the border;
- (2) giving efficient training to our men in mountain warfare; and
- (3) developing roads and other communications.

6. I do not accept the suggestion that we should have long-range bombers. This is against our basic approach to the problem of defence. They are too costly and, if we get them, it means that we do not equip ourselves with

The reasons for the rising were said to have included high taxation imposed by Chinese authorities, resentment at inroads made on the Dalai Lama's authority, the compulsory indoctrination of youth, and requisitioning of grain for the Chinese Army.

¹⁴ See the preceding item.

more useful aircraft and delay, to some extent, our industrial development. The basic strength that India should aim at will only come through rapid industrial development. For the moment, this means fulfilling the Second Five Year Plan.

7. I am astonished to see from the letter of Apa Pant,¹⁵ dated March 7th; that he estimates Chinese troops in various areas of Tibet as one hundred twenty thousand. Apart from this figure being much too big to be easily accepted, the difference between this figure and Menon's¹⁶ figure of forty-five thousand is very great. I think, we should ask Apa Pant on what basis he has suggested his figure.

Cable to R.K. Nehru¹⁷

I have seen your telegram 195 May 18 to Food Minister.¹⁸ I have consulted him and also Planning Commission.

2. It is true that two subjects are interrelated. At the same time they are two different branches of enquiry. Food delegation intended staying in China for two or three weeks and would have gone in June.¹⁹ Planning Commission delegation intends spending about two months there.

¹⁵ Political Officer of India in Sikkim and Bhutan.

¹⁶ P.N. Menon (b. 1920); joined the Indian Foreign Service as a War Service Officer, 1947; Consul-General of India, Lhasa, October 1954-November 1956; First Secretary, Indian Embassy, Rome, April 1957-May 1958; Consul-General of India, Damascus, June 1958-February 1959; Director (External Publicity), MEA, 1959-62; Consul-General, San Francisco, 1962-65; Ambassador to Cambodia, 1965-68; Joint Secretary, Additional Secretary and Secretary, MEA, 1968-72.

¹⁷ New Delhi, 19 May 1956. JN Collection.

¹⁸ With regard to the two delegations, one to study the Chinese techniques of agricultural planning, and the other, a larger one, for the study of producer cooperatives, R.K. Nehru, India's Ambassador, suggested that an expert for agricultural planning might be attached to the larger delegation and that only one delegation might be sent. He opined that two separate delegations covering the same ground might cause inconvenience to the Chinese Government. A.P. Jain, Minister for Food and Agriculture, had suggested, in his telegram of 17 May to R.K. Nehru that the two studies should be carried out separately.

¹⁹ See *ante*, p. 111.

3. However for reasons mentioned by you and to suit convenience of Chinese Government it is proposed to send both the se delegations together early in July. Possibly food team may go three or four days earlier for some talks on their special subjects. They would then join the other team and work with them or, where necessary, separately. They would come back after two or three weeks while the rest of the team from the Planning Commission would stay on for closer study of agrarian cooperatives and allied matters.

4. I hope this will suit Chinese Government.