

## SELECTED WORKS OF JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

China and Tibet

### **188. In the Lok Sabha: Acquisition of Properties at Lhasa<sup>1</sup>**

(a) Yes.<sup>2</sup>

(b) Negotiations are underway to lease a plot of land measuring 5,500 sq. ft. and acquire building thereon for the residence and office of our Consul General.

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### **189. To Subimal Dutt: Inaccurate Chinese Maps<sup>3</sup>**

The Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru):  
I agree to your draft, but I would like to add a sentence right at the end.  
This might run as follows:

"You will appreciate that the continuing publication of Chinese maps showing considerable parts of Indian and Bhutanese territory as if they

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<sup>1</sup> Reply to questions, 11 March 1959. Lok Sabha Debates, Second Series, Vol. XXVII, col. 5572.

<sup>2</sup> Lia Palchoudhuri had asked (a) whether the GOI proposed to acquire certain properties at Lhasa; (b) if so, their details.

<sup>3</sup> Note, 20 March 1959.

were in China is not in accordance with long established usage as well as treaties, and is a matter of great concern to us"<sup>4</sup>.

2. If you agree with this, you can include it and have the letter sent to our Ambassador in Peking<sup>5</sup> for delivery.

3. You may also have a copy sent to the Chinese Ambassador here.<sup>6</sup>

4. The idea struck me that in view of developments in Tibet, perhaps this was not the right time to send this letter. But, on reconsideration, I think it is right for us to send it as soon as possible.

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### **To Chou En-lai: Indo-Tibetan Border<sup>7</sup>**

*Letter from the Prime Minister of India to the Prime Minister of China*

New Delhi

22<sup>nd</sup> March, 1959

DEAR MR. PRIME MINISTER,

Many thanks for your letter of the 23<sup>rd</sup> January which I have read with the care and attention which it deserves.

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<sup>4</sup> The last paragraph of Nehru's letter of 22 March 1959 to Chou En-lai began with this sentence. See item 190, p. 454, paragraph 8.

<sup>5</sup> G Parthasarathi.

<sup>6</sup> Pan Tzu-li.

<sup>7</sup> Letter to the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of People's Republic of China.

Reproduced from Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, *Notes, Memoranda and Letters Exchanged and Agreements Signed Between the Governments of India and China, 1954-1959*. White Paper(n.p., n.d.) [New Delhi, 1959], pp. 55-57. Also available in JN Collection

2. I am grateful to you for the facilities which your Government accorded to our small delegation which visited China to study your water conservancy methods and programme.

Two more delegations –one to study methods for improving agricultural yield and the other to study your iron and steel programme –will shortly be reaching China. I have no doubt that they will benefit from this opportunity of studying the remarkable progress which your country has achieved in these fields.

3. We were glad to receive Mr. Chang Han Fu in India and I do hope that his brief visit was enjoyable and enabled him to see something of our own efforts to develop our national resources. I entirely agree with you that such exchange of visits on both sides can be of great help in resolving the somewhat similar problems which face our respective countries in their endeavour to quicken the rate of our economic progress.

4. On receipt of your letter I have again examined the basis of the determination of the frontier between India and the Tibet Region of China. It is true that this frontier has not been demarcated on the ground in all the sectors but I am somewhat surprised to know that this frontier was not accepted at any time by the Government of China. The traditional frontier, as you may be aware, follows the geographical principle of watershed on the crest of the High Himalayan Range, but apart from this, in most parts it has the sanction of specific international agreements between the then Governments of India and the Central Government of China. It may perhaps be useful if I draw your attention to some of these agreements:

(i) Sikkim- The boundary of Sikkim, a protectorate of India, with the Tibet Region of China was defined in the Anglo- Chinese Convention 1890 and jointly demarcated on the ground in 1895.

(ii) The Ladakh Region of the State of Jammu and Kashmir- A treaty of 1842 between Kashmir on the one hand and the Emperor of China

and Lama Guru of Lhasa on the other, mentions the India-China boundary in the Ladakh region. In 1847 the Chinese Government admitted that this boundary was sufficiently and distinctly fixed. The area now claimed by China has always been depicted as part of India on official maps, has been surveyed by Indian officials and even a Chinese map of shows it as Indian territory.

(iii)The McMahon Line-As you are aware, the so-called McMahon Line runs eastwards from the eastern borders of Bhutan and defines the boundary of China on the one hand and on the India and Burma on the other. Contrary to what has been reported to you, this line was, in fact, drawn at a Tripartite Conference held at Simla in 1913-1914 between the Plenipotentiaries of the Governments of China, Tibet and India. At the time of acceptance of the delineation of this frontier, Lonchen Shatra, the Tibetan Plenipotentiary, in letters exchanged, stated explicitly that he had received orders from Lhasa to agree to the boundary as marked on the map appended to the Convention. The Line was drawn after full discussion and was confirmed subsequently by formal exchange of letters; and there is nothing to indicate that the Tibetan authorities were in any way dissatisfied with the agreed boundary. Moreover, although the Chinese Plenipotentiary at the conference objected to the boundaries between Inner and Outer Tibet and between Tibet and China, there is no mention of any Chinese reservation in respect of the India-Tibet frontier either during the discussions or at the time of their initialling the Convention. This line has the incidental advantage of running along the crest of the High Himalayan Range which forms the natural dividing line between the Tibetan plateau in the north and the sub-montane region in the south. In our previous discussions and particularly during your visit to India in January 1957, we were gratified to note that you were

prepared to accept this line as representing the frontier between China and India in this region and I hope that we shall reach an understanding on this basis.

5. Thus, in these three different sectors covering such the larger part of our boundary with China, there is sufficient authority based on geography, tradition as well as treaties for the boundary as shown in our published maps. The remaining sector from the tri-junction of the Nepal, India and Tibet boundary up to Ladakh is also traditional and follows well defined watersheds between the river systems in the south and the west on the one hand and north and east on the other. This delineation is confirmed by old revenue records and maps and by the exercise of Indian administrative authority up to the boundary line for decades.

6. As regards Barahoti (which you call Wu-Je), I agree with you that its rightful ownership should be settled by negotiation. During the talks held last year, we provided extensive documentary proofs that this area has been under Indian jurisdiction and lies well within our frontiers. An on-the-spot investigation could hardly throw any useful light until proofs to the contrary could be adduced. Nevertheless, we were agreeable to both sides agreeing not to send their civil and military officials to the area.

Unfortunately, your delegation did not agree to our suggestion. I learn that a material change in the situation has since been effected by the despatch of Chinese civil and military detachments, equipped with arms, to camp in the area after our own civil party had withdrawn at the beginning of last winter. If the reports that we have received about an armed Chinese party camping and erecting permanent structures in Hoti during winter are correct, it would seem that unilateral action, not in accordance with customs, was being taken in assertion of your claim to the disputed area.

7. I do hope that a study of the foregoing paragraphs will convince you that not only is the delineation of our frontier, as published in our maps, based

on natural and geographical features but that it also coincides with tradition and over a large part is confirmed by international agreements. I need hardly add that independent India would be the last country to make any encroachments beyond its well-established frontiers. It was in the confidence that the general question of our common frontier was settled to the satisfaction of both sides that I declared publicly and in Parliament on several occasions that there is no room for doubt about our frontiers as shown in the published maps. We thought that our position was clearly understood and accepted by your Government. However, as unfortunately there is some difference of views between our two Governments in regard to the delineation of the frontier at some places, I agree that the position as it was before the recent disputes arose should be respected by both sides and that neither side should try to take unilateral action in exercise of what it conceives to be its right. Further, if any possession has been secured recently, the position should be rectified.

8. You will appreciate that the continuing publication of Chinese maps showing considerable parts of India and Bhutanese territory as if they were in China is not in accordance with long established usage as well as treaties, and is a matter of great concern to us. As I said in my previous letter, we greatly value our friendship with China. Our two countries evolved the principles of Panch Sheel which has now found widespread acceptance among the other countries in the world. It would be most unfortunate if these frontier questions should now affect the friendly relations existing between our countries. I hope therefore that an early understanding in this matter will be reached.

With kind regards,

Yours Sincerely,  
(Sd.)JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

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## **192. To Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit: The Situation in Tibet<sup>8</sup>**

Your telegram 0729 of March 25. Not much news about the situation in Lhasa has been received from our Consulate General since my last statement in Parliament. Our Consulate General is now guarded by a Chinese military detachment and apparently the Consul General is now isolated in his premises. We are finding out whether any restriction has been imposed on his movement. Meantime from such information as has reached him Consul General reports that important buildings in Lhasa including some monasteries have received considerable damage as a result of Chinese firing and shelling. Dalai Lama's palace Potala and his summer residence Norbulingka are also reported to have sustained more or less serious damage. Tibetan local Government has ceased functioning and the Chinese Military Commission has taken control in the Lhasa area. We have no information about the situation in the rest of Tibet. Dalai Lama left Lhasa three days before the troubles broke out. His present whereabouts are not known. Both the Tibetans and Chinese agree that the 17point agreement of 1951 has broken down. Future is uncertain but I fear that the Tibetans are in for a period of severe treatment from the Chinese.

2. There is considerable concern in India about the situation in Tibet in general and sympathy for the Dalai Lama and the Tibetans. We are faced with a difficult situation. It would clearly not be wise for us to do or say things which would make the position of the Tibetans still more difficult. We have not made any approach to the Chinese Government. They have told Parthasarathi in Peking that the present troubles are due to instigation by the Americans and Chiang Kai-shek. It is difficult for us to say what truth there is in this allegation.

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<sup>8</sup> Telegram, 26 March 1959

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### **193. To N.R. Pillai: Nuclear Tests, Tibet and Other Matters<sup>9</sup>**

I am sending you a letter from the UK High Commissioner and a personal message from Mr Macmillan to me. I should like to send a reply to this to Mr Macmillan, preferably tomorrow. Could you kindly draft a reply?<sup>10</sup>

2. The reply should deal briefly with the main contents of the message and express our appreciation of the fact that events are gradually being shaped so that they might yield satisfactory results. In particular, it should express my appreciation of Mr Macmillan's efforts in this direction. I entirely agree with him that our thinking and approach should be flexible and every avenue should be explored. I think you might mention that personally I have long been of opinion that the establishment of an area of disengagement would produce a very considerable lessening of tension and would help towards finding agreements. Further that we earnestly hope that nuclear tests will be suspended indefinitely both because that is good in itself and because this also helps in creating an atmosphere conducive to settlements.

3. We shall have to say something in reply about the position of Tibet. Today I sent a telegram to our High Commissioner in London.<sup>11</sup> That was for her own information. A briefer reference to Tibet would have to be included in my reply to Mr Macmillan. FS will kindly draft this.

4. The personal message from Mr. Macmillan to me might be shown to the Defence Minister.

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<sup>9</sup> Note, 26 March 1959

<sup>10</sup> See item 217.

<sup>11</sup> See the preceding item

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### **194. To Subimal Dutt: Tibetan Questions<sup>12</sup>**

Shri Kushak Bakula came to see me today. He spoke to me about the proposed Tibetan College at Leh. I believe that Shri Datar Singh<sup>13</sup> has written to us about this matter and we have given some encouragement. I do not quite know if we are dealing with this or the Education Ministry.

2. Shri Kushak Bakula wanted to get a large library of textbooks etc. from Lhasa as well as teachers. I pointed out to him that this was hardly a feasible proposition at present. But I think we might look into this business of starting some kind of a Tibetan College at Leh.

3. Shri Bakula also spoke to me about some land being given to him to build a kind of a hostel and temple for Tibetans in Delhi City. I have asked him to send a scheme for it. Meanwhile, the W. H. & S. Ministry has reserved a small plot of land, somewhat less than an acre, for this purpose.<sup>14</sup>

4. He also mentioned to me about some Buddha relics which are said to be in Hyderabad and which he would like to take to Leh. I know nothing about this.

5. He said he would like to go to Lhasa this year. I pointed out that in view of developments in Tibet, this was not a feasible proposition in the foreseeable future.

6. He referred to the road being built from Kargil to Leh. This has taken a mighty long time. It appears that the engineers in charge of it have been suspended and a Commission is enquiring into their alleged misdeeds.

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<sup>12</sup> Note, 29 March 1959

<sup>13</sup> Development adviser for Kashmir, GOI, 1955-59

<sup>14</sup> Nehru had written to K. C. Reddy about it on 28 January 1959. See SWJN/SS/46/p. 323

Hence, the road-building has been held up. I think it is important that this should continue. <sup>15</sup>

7. Shri Bakula also referred to a proposal once made for a road from the Kulu Valley to Leh. This has been investigated on several occasions. It would be a difficult and very expensive road, and it would probably be entirely closed for traffic for six or seven months in a year.

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**195. To Apa B. Pant: Sikkim and Tibet<sup>16</sup>**

March 30, 1959

My dear Apa,

I have received today your letter of the 26th March with which you have sent me a letter from the Maharaja of Sikkim dated March 24. I shall reply to the Maharaja's letter somewhat later. Meanwhile, will you please convey to him my thanks for his letter and tell him that I appreciate fully his sentiments in regard to the developments in Tibet? We are all deeply grieved at what happened and is happening, and we should like to do what we can to stop this tragedy.

Yours Sincerely,  
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

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**198. To Rajendra Prasad: On Tibet<sup>17</sup>**

March 30, 1959

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<sup>15</sup> The road from Srinagar to Kargil had been completed in 1948; the Kargil-Leh road could only be opened on 1 August 1960

<sup>16</sup> Letter

<sup>17</sup> Letter

My dear Rajendra Babu,

Thank you for your letter of the 29th March.

It is true that much has happened in Tibet since your departure from India.<sup>18</sup> I spoke twice in the Lok Sabha on this subject; once about ten days ago and today.<sup>19</sup> The news in papers is of three kinds:

1. Some brief information which we have given and which we have obtained from our Consulate General in Lhasa. This is limited, but reliable in so far as it goes.
2. Chinese Government statements which appeared in the Press yesterday.
3. Brief reports and rumours coming from Kalimpong and sometimes Hong Kong.

As for No. 2, that represents the Chinese Government's version and viewpoint. It is important because that gives us an insight into their approach. Of course, that approach is necessarily one-sided and the facts they give need not all be true.

As for No. 3, there is hardly any single reference in these rumours which can be verified and some of them are patently untrue.

We are thus in a difficult position even in so far as facts are concerned. Gradually, no doubt, we shall know more of them. The difficulty is greater still from other points of view. The position of Tibet has been, for a long time past, that of an autonomous region of the Chinese State. One may assume that for various reasons there has been a revolt against Chinese domination. A kind of revolt started nearly three years ago in the Eastern borders of Tibet among the Khampas. This has been going on now for all this period in the shape of guerilla activities, Recently what happened was that the Tibetan Armed Forces, which are relatively small in numbers and

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<sup>18</sup> President Rajendra Prasad had returned on 27 March 1959 from his 12-day trip to Indo-China

<sup>19</sup> See item 197

very feeble as a military force, rebelled in Lhasa itself and were backed by the Tibetan local government. For a few days the Chinese did not take any major step. But then they came down with a heavy hand and crushed the revolt and made large numbers of people prisoners. In Lhasa, therefore, it may be that the revolt has been suppressed, but the Khampa revolt probably continues over areas in Eastern and South-Eastern Tibet.

There should be no question of our suppressing our conscience or doing anything patently wrong for fear of consequences. But it is not at all clear first what the full facts are and secondly what we can do about them. A step that we may take might actually injure the interests of the Tibetans. It is clear that we cannot take military measures. At the most we can express our opinion in more or less forcible language. Such an opinion on the part of Government should be based on a knowledge of facts and a full consideration of what other steps might follow. Obviously, it may have far-reaching consequences. We cannot merely be swept away by rumours and sentimental consideration which rightly affect us.

As a matter of fact, enough indication has already been given about our deep concern in what happens in Tibet and a kind of passive disapproval. Our newspapers have written, of course, fairly strongly on the subject. A government has to move more cautiously.

The Chinese Government have published some letters purporting to have been written by the Dalai Lama. If these letters were really written by him, then it does give a different colour to the picture.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps they were not written by him. We shall have to wait and find out.

We do not yet know where the Dalai Lama is.

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<sup>20</sup> On 28 March, the Chinese Government released the correspondence between the Dalai Lama and the Chinese Representative in Lhasa, General Tan Kuan-san, II - 16 March 1959. However, the Dalai Lama has recorded that there had been such an exchange of letters. See *My Land and My People. The Autobiography of His Holiness the Dalai Lama*, edited by David Howarth.

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

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### **199. Rumours about Tibet<sup>21</sup>**

I regret I am unable to make a statement about events and matters which have no basis in fact. The Chinese authorities have not searched our Consulate or Mission abroad nor have they asked to vacate the Mission.<sup>22</sup>

2. May I respectfully point out to Mr. Speaker that the habit of accepting every rumour and proceeding on that basis in Parliament is not a very desirable one or to be encouraged.

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### **J.S. Mehta to Indian Representatives Abroad<sup>23</sup>**

[Refer to item 197]

2 April 1959

I enclose a short note giving the background leading to the present situation in Tibet for your information and guidance.

2. Subsequent events and our official policy have been clarified in the statements made by the Prime Minister in the Lok Sabha on the 23rd and 30th March, 1959. Our policy regarding the grant of asylum has also been enunciated by the Prime Minister in response to a short notice question on 30th March, 1959 (text enclosed).

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<sup>21</sup> Note, 31 March 1959

<sup>22</sup> This refers to a question in the Lok Sabha by Premji R. Assar, Jan Sangh MP from Ratnagiri North, Bombay, about search of the Indian Mission in Lhasa

<sup>23</sup> Letter from Deputy Secretary, MEA. *Revolt in Tibet, Dalai Lama's Arrival in India 1959*, Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, pp. 47-48

Please acknowledge receipt.

### THE SITUATION IN TIBET

The vast semi-circular region consisting of Kham, Amdo, Golok, Lithang and Batang were quasi-autonomous territories (sometimes referred to as Inner Tibet) and were inhabited by war-like and unruly semi-tribal people. Since 1914, these areas were supposed to be politically under the suzerainty of the Central Government of China, but owed religious allegiance to the Dalai Lama. With the impact of Chinese Communist occupation in the wake of advance towards Tibet, heavy taxes and, to some extent, under the influence of the anti-Chinese Mimang leadership, the Khampas revolted against the Chinese in 1956. This rebellion in turn provoked strong repressive action by the Chinese including aerial bombing, destruction of monasteries and the displacement of a large number of the settled population. In 1957, the Dalai Lama, on his return from India, was reported to have pleaded to the Chinese for clemency towards the Khampas. Displaced from their homeland and somewhat encouraged by the reported sympathy of the Dalai Lama, between January and March 1958, about 50,000 to 60,000 Khampas and some Gholapkas migrated to various parts of outer Tibet, nearly 4,000 of them going to Lhasa. The Chinese authorities, though outwardly conciliatory, created apprehension of possible arrest and seizure by various security precautions and insistence on identity papers which were imposed exclusively on these Khampa refugees. Whether it was the apprehension of a Chinese swoop or a genuine desire not to endanger Lhasa and the person of Dalai Lama, the Khampas started leaving Lhasa in small batches at the beginning of June 1958. Smarting against the Chinese for the damage to their homeland and true to their warlike tradition, they started preparing for an armed clash to settle accounts with the Chinese.

An Amdo-Khampa United Party, pledged to fight the Chinese, became the nucleus of the resistance movement. Mules and arms were purchased at exorbitant prices and volunteer groups from Central, Eastern Tibet as well as from those residents in India congregated in one or two well-defined areas, particularly in the north and south-east of Lhasa. According to reliable reports, 13,000 armed Khampas concentrated in a small triangular area in the Lokha region (south-east of Lhasa) alone.

The Chinese authorities in Tibet endeavoured to control this Khampa threat through the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Kashag. In August, they urged the Dalai Lama to use Tibetan troops to suppress Khampas, but the suggestion was turned down for fear of troops deserting and joining the Khampas. A letter was dispatched to the Khampa leaders and later a delegation of Tibetan officials and representatives of the monasteries was proposed to be sent; but even though wide publicity was given, it never actually undertook the mission. Since the Khampas had divided their forces, in September, three separate missions were sent to Khampa strongholds; but for one reason or another, they proved equal failures. At the same time, serious clashes between Chinese and Khampa guerillas, resulting in casualties and losses on both sides, occurred at periodical intervals in various parts of Tibet. The Chinese took protective measures to strengthen their garrisons, placed fresh restrictions on Tibetan traders and imposed almost a complete ban on the movement of pilgrims to India. They suspected that Tibetan officials were sympathetic with Khampa activities. The Dalai Lama, apprehensive of the consequences of continued Khampa defiance and of Chinese suspicion of half-heartedness, in December 1958, appointed a Committee of 62 led by a member of the Cabinet most trusted by the Chinese to deal with the Khampa problem.

Large Chinese reinforcements were brought to the Sikang region (East of Tibet) and heavy casualties have been reported amongst the inhabitants in

this area. There have been reports of 4 million Chinese (Han) being settled in these comparatively fertile valleys.

Meanwhile, in Central Tibet, the winter months were utilised by the Khampas to gather strength and consolidate their complete hold over a vast area lying between the south bank of Tsangpo and Bhutan-India border extending eastward from Nagartse (near Gyantse) upto Lho Dzong. The Khampa rebels took upon themselves the title of "Voluntary force for the defence of religion" and seemed to have re-established contact with the anti-Chinese Mimang party. Food supplies and arms were acquired by fair purchase and expropriation from the local population. Estimates of the Khampa force vary from 15 to 25,000. They are equipped with small arms, but probably have limited supplies of arms and ammunition. There have been reports, not confirmed indisputably, of an air strip having been built at Trigu where K.M.T. planes are alleged to have dropped ammunition and equipment.

In spite of the fact that the Chinese were treading warily in Tibet and even postponed their programme of 'civil reform' in 1956, there was a general feeling among Tibetans that the Chinese had not observed either the letter or the spirit of the 17-Point Agreement of 1951 guaranteeing Tibetan autonomy in internal and religious affairs. Nevertheless, until the recent trouble, there was an apprehension amongst responsible elements that the violent course of action adopted by the Khampas would only endanger the position of the Dalai Lama and what remained of Tibet's own way of life. The invitation issued last November for the Dalai Lama to visit Peking, though declined, did however increase the anxiety for his future safety. The cancellation of the Prime Minister's proposed visit to Lhasa apparently also added to the sense of despair about the prospect of being able to preserve Tibetan autonomy and the fabric of her institutions.

The recent trouble in Lhasa started when it was rumoured that the Dalai Lama had been invited to lunch and advised not to bring any personal armed guards with him. It is reported that as many as 30,000 people gathered to prevent the Dalai Lama from accepting an invitation which may have resulted in his being taken prisoner. The reported danger to the person of Dalai Lama provoked an uprising in which obviously all caution was abandoned and the people openly demonstrated against the Chinese authority in Tibet. These recent events seemed to have finally forged the unity and identity of Tibetan aims and methods with those of the Khampas. On 11th March, Tibetan officials summarily announced their severance of all connections with the Chinese and were reported to be preparing a statement listing points of difference with Chinese rulers and in conclusion demanding the independence of Tibet.