

Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru

Series II, Volume 8

The victory and consolidation of the Chinese Communists is going to have far-reaching results all over South East Asia and ultimately in the world. India will naturally be affected by it, though there is no reason to fear any direct conflict. The future of Tibet may become a subject for argument. Indo-China and Siam, both of which have large numbers of Chinese, will be powerfully affected. So also Burma. In view of all these possibilities and probabilities, we have to watch this rapidly developing situation in China with great care and attention.

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The situation in China¹

The attached letter and note from Ambassador in China² are very interesting. I think that Panikkar has allowed his imagination to go a little further than facts warrant. But his analysis is a good one, though it goes too far.

2- I think we should give thought to this changing China and shape our policy to some extent in accordance with these changes.

3- The first thing is that our Ambassador and staff should not move out of Nanking with the Government, even if that Government moves out. That has already been decided. But I should like to emphasise it. Following a tottering government is not a good policy. At the most some one member of the staff may follow the Government, but the

¹ Note to the Foreign Secretary, 5 December 1948. J.N. Collection.

² K.M. Panikkar

Embassy as a whole should remain in Nanking and face the new situation. We cannot ignore the Communist Government, specially after it captures Nanking. How we deal with it is another matter. We shall not of course immediately recognise it. But at the same time we cannot ignore it. We may have to have some dealings with it. For all these reasons the Embassy should continue in Nanking.

4- I think it would be desirable for us to have some rather unofficial contacts with the Communist areas and their leaders. This means no commitment of any kind. It means first of all that we should have information and should know more or less what their policies are. Secondly, it means that we can have some kind of unofficial or semi-official contacts with them which might prove of use later. Thirdly, they might be induced not to be hostile to us. I have some slight reputation with the leaders of Communist China because of the Medical Mission that we sent³. I have corresponded with Mao Tse-tung⁴ and other leaders in the past. All this might help.

5- It is clear that any kind of Government that may be established by Communist in China will be outwardly a coalition government ,though it will be dominated by the Communists. Chiang Kai-shek's government is so discredited that most neutral people will associate themselves with the Communist Government. To begin with this coalition government will try not to follow what might be called a Communist policy. It will adopt moderate rate policies in order to win over the other elements in China. It will be anxious to develop

³ In September 1938 the Indian National Congress had sent to China a five-member medical mission to work the Eighth Route Army of the Chinese Communist Party which was fighting the Japanese imperialists.

⁴ For Nehru's letter to Mao Tse-tung see *Selected Works*, Vol.10, (first series), p.75. Mao's letter dated 24 May 1939 is printed in Nehru's *A Bunch of Old Letters*, pp. 385-86.

relations with neighbour countries, notably India. I rather doubt if even Communist China will be just a hanger-on of the Soviet.

6- Now the future is likely to be full of new developments and we have to be wide awake and not merely hang on to Chiang Kai-shek and his fading authority. Nor should we just follow what the U.K. or U.S.A might do in China. All this means that our Embassy should be alive to these considerations, and secondly, if possible, we should develop some informal contacts with the Communist side.

7- How are we to do this latter thing? It would not be right at all for any member of our Embassy staff to try to go to the Communist area. It is possible for some one else to go there. That some one must be fully acquainted with China and capable of reaching these places without much help from any one here. It is not easy to think of such a person. But ever since I met Cyril P.K. Fazal, the Indian Christian who has recently returned from China with Pannikar's strong recommendation, I have been thinking about this matter. Fazal has worked in China on behalf of various United Nations relief organisations for three years. He knows something about the interior including, I think, part of the Communist interior. He has many contacts.

8- I should like you to think about all this and then to discuss it with me. I should also like you to meet Fazal and have a talk with him, without disclosing out intention in any way. He is rather at a loose end and, from Panikkar's account, he is a man of worth and capacity.

To Stafford Cripps

Jaipur

December 17/18, 1948

My dear Stafford,

I have received your letter of the 10th December today and almost immediately I sent a brief reply. I am now writing to you more fully in answer to what you have said. Most of us here have also been greatly disturbed at the developments in China, Burma, Malaya and elsewhere. Communist subversive propaganda has been in evidence in India too during this year and has given us some trouble. That trouble has not been so great as it might have been because our Government's position was stronger and we had to a large extent the ear of the masses. So far as the Communists were concerned, their policy for India was exactly the same as for Burma and elsewhere. It was not for any lack of trying that they did not succeed here. Why did they succeed elsewhere? Surely it is up to us to try to understand the real causes behind the powerful movements going on in South East Asia. Gradually the Kuomintang Government has lost nearly all the support that it had and most people, that is non-Communists even, have come to the conclusion that almost anything is better than the continuation of the Kuomintang rule. Armies walk across to the Communists. The Communist areas, poor as they are, are better administered and there is far less of graft and corruption there. Able men are at the top there and they have some success adapted the Communist theory to Chinese circumstances. The only possible way to counter this was for the National Government to go ahead itself with political, administrative and economic reform. Instead of this they carried on in the old way, in fact in a worse way, because progressively they lost the support of the middle elements. They relied completely on American help. That helps, in money and materials, undoubtedly goes some distance. But it is, as events have shown, completely inadequate to meet the kind of situation that arose in

China. In fact that help largely and through devious routes managed to reach the Communists.

We see thus in China a complete mishandling of the situation by the Kuomintang and an almost equally complete lack of understanding on the part of the U.S.A. Money and equipment are no doubt important, but psychology of human masses is more important.