

Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru

Series II, Volume 12

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General Perspective

There are one or two matters, apart from the general summing up, that I should like to mention to you. One is about Tibet; rebellion in Tibet, communist or something else¹. It was subsequently, I think, denied. It was completely baseless and without foundation. There has been no trouble at all in Tibet. The Tibetan Government for reasons of their own has decided to send away some Chinese residents there. That is all that has happened and we come into the picture because we happen to be on the way. We can neither stop them being sent away or do anything else about it. We come in because we were asked to allow them passage through India. That is the only way we come in. Presumably they will come to India and we will allow them to pass wherever they want to go to.

In this connection, I should like to say something else. Yesterday I saw an article² in a Bombay weekly, called *Blitz*. Anything more fantastical, anything more removed from truth I can't imagine. I am very sorry I am mentioning the paper-I cannot help it, there is a limit and that limit has been passed so

¹ See *post*, Section 12. sub-section V(iv), item 3

² The article published on 2 August 1949 cautioned that since political changes of far-reaching international importance were taking place in Tibet, it was not advisable for India to have a British officer as India's politics agent in Lhasa, 'for it was humanly impossible for him to implement Pandit Nehru's policy independent foreign policy without being consciously or unconsciously biased in favour of Anglo-American global interests.'" It demanded an explanation for granting one year's extension to this British officer "and that too at a time when the Tibetans decided to repudiate the age-old Chinese suzerainty and join in the 'cold war' against USSR and Red China: a step which was later acclaimed both in Britain and America."

far as I am concerned and my Government is concerned; and the gentleman³ who has written that article in this paper is an idiot, a knave or a liar or everything combined. I am surprised that a man who calls himself a journalist should indulge in those falsehoods, and this gentleman particularly who has been guilty in the past of treasonable conduct to India⁴ and whom we have forgiven so far. I want to tell him, if he is sitting here, that this is the last of this kind of thing that we have tolerated. For the present all privileges will be withdrawn from him. We are considering what other steps we may take because this is not a simple matter, and

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Letters to Premier of Provinces

New Delhi
July 20, 1949

My dear Premier,

I am sorry for the slight delay in sending you my fortnightly letter. Many of you will be coming up to Delhi soon and we shall meet and discuss various matters.⁵ Nevertheless I am writing to you this letter to draw your attention to certain happenings during the last fortnight.

2. I have had some rather unique experiences during the last fortnight. I went to Ladakh in the far north, between (the Himalayas and the Karakoram ranges. and spent a few brief days there. I could write to you much about my visit because Ladakh is a little known area and deserves notice for a variety of reasons. It is, as you know. a frontier area and on an airfield near Leh there was a sign post pointing out directions to Tibet, China, the Soviet

³ G.K. Reddy, at that time the correspondent of Blitz in New Delhi.

⁴ He served as Director of Publicity attached to the "Azad Kashmir" Government

⁵ Several premiers had come for discussions held from 17 to 24 July on the Draft Constitution. They also attended the food conference on 23 and 24 July 1949.

Union and other surrounding countries. The average altitude of the lower valleys of Ladakh is 11,500 feet. The higher valleys go up to 15,000 feet. The people approximate to the Tibetans in appearance, religion, culture and dress. Lamaism, that is a form of Buddhism which flourishes there and the influence of the Lamas is great. There are undoubtedly some able and erudite scholars among them, but the great majority seemed to me to be very ignorant and unlearned, Little care had been bestowed on the piles of old manuscripts lying in the monasteries, The people generally are very poor, but tough and rather jolly.

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Letters to Premier of Provinces

29. In China the Communist forces are marching south. Meanwhile the old Nationalist Government has expressed its determination to fight on. It is rather doubtful how far it will succeed. Reaction to events in China has been marked in Tibet and the Tibetan Government are trying to send away the Chinese in Lhasa and elsewhere as they are afraid of communist activity there.

30. In Burma the situation appears slightly to improve from the Government's point of view. But conditions are still fluid. Indians in Burma have suffered a great deal owing to the civil war and many are isolated in the rebel areas and we have tried to evacuate them.

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To Vijayalakshmi Pandit⁶

New Delhi
July 1, 1949

Nan Dear,

⁶ J.N. Collection. Extracts.

I have just seen your telegram to Bajpai about your interview with Dean Acheson. I am sending a personal telegram to you in reply.⁷ Bajpai might perhaps send a separate message.⁸ I must say that I find this constant pressure on us to settle the Kashmir issue rather irritating. We are going to send you a long statement about Kashmir soon. It should be clearly understood that we are not weakening on this issue. Indeed we cannot. It is a little difficult to deal with Madame Chiang's talk with you. The Chiang Kai-sheks and their group have singularly failed in China, failed not because of military reasons, but essentially because of their other policies. There is not a ghost of a chance of their succeeding now. Hardly anybody who counts in China thinks so. With all my friendship for the Chiangs, I cannot as Prime Minister or Foreign Minister, shut my eyes to facts and to my own convictions. I might add that Dr Lo⁹ has proved very loyal to Chiang Kai-shek and has tried his utmost to put the case for him to me-perhaps better than Madame Chiang did to you. He has done so not to me only, but to others. I do not think anybody else could have done it better. partly because he is no fool, in spite of what Madame Chiang might say, and partly because he is liked by everybody here and his integrity is believed in. Naturally I have spoken to him in a friendly way, but I have made it clear that all we can do is to watch and we cannot possibly ally ourselves with the Kuomintang merely because of the past. We cannot ignore facts.

There are in India today very few people who have a good word for the Kuomintang. Our newspapers are nearly all against it. Therefore, even if I

⁷ See *ante*, p.330.

⁸ Bajpai replied to Vijayalakshmi on 1 July that he was not surprised at Acheson's suggestion for a plebiscite administrator in Kashmir or his threat of withholding the World Bank or U.S. loans to India if India did not settle the Kashmir issue. He informed her that the Indian Government was aware of the attitude of the American and Belgian members on the U.N.C.I.P. and of "disquieting reports which strongly suggest possibility of resumption of hostilities by Pakistan." and clarified that 'we have no intention of yielding to pressure from any quarter.'

⁹ Lo Chia-leun was Chinese Ambassador to India at this time.

wanted to. I just could not adopt a policy which was completely against public opinion. But frankly I do not want to adopt such a policy which has no reason, or logic, or idealism behind it. It is absurd to think that Chiang Kai-shek, with the remnants of the army, unaided by America, can now meet and defeat the Communist forces in China. During the past years, by his stiff-necked policy, he alienated every progressive group. The Communists have won in China not so much by their strength, but by the innumerable mistakes and errors of Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang.

The position therefore, is that we are in no hurry to recognize Communist China¹⁰, but we just are not going to stand up as crusaders against it. We shall wait and see what happens.

You wrote to me in a previous letter about the big sums which the Chinese leaders had taken to the U.S. and how they were investing in big property. All this is not very pleasant. The reputation of the Kuomintang leaders in such and like matters is terribly low in China as well as abroad.

What indeed does Madame Chiang expect India to do? We have troubles of our own and they are bad enough. We do not wish to add to them or enter lists in any other country. We have to take facts as they are and the biggest fact of this decade is this continuing Chinese revolution. I am quite convinced that if we stood up for the bankrupt Government in China now, we would be condemned in India and this would give a fillip to communism in India, strange as that sounds. The way to fight communism is not by armies, but by other methods and these methods are psychological as well as the adoption of progressive policies.

I am very sorry for Madame Chiang and I want you to be gentle to her and give her my answer in the best language you can find. But I do not wish to delude her about India's attitude.

Yours, Jawaharlal

¹⁰ India recognised People's China on 30 December 1949.

The Indian Mission at Lhasa¹¹

I have read Mr. Richardson's notes^{12 13} and the comments of Foreign Secretary¹⁴ and Secretary-General.¹⁵

- (1) I do not understand how the question of our continuing our mission in Lhasa arises. Of course, we are going to continue it.
- (2) We should certainly try to maintain and continue our friendly relations with the Tibetan Government and give them such aid as we have been giving them in the past.
- (3) Our representative should recommend social and economic reforms, as suggested by Secretary-General.
- (4) We should be very careful in taking any measures which might be considered a challenge to the Chinese Communist Government or which might mean an invasion of Tibetan sovereignty. I do not think that any question arises, at present at least, of our occupying any part of Tibetan

¹¹ Note to Secretary-General, Ministry of External Affairs, 9 July 1949, J. N. Collection

¹² Hugh Edward Richardson (b. 1905); entered I.C.S., 1930; British Trade Agent, Gyantse, and Head of British Mission, Lhasa, 1936-40 and 1946-47; Indian Trade Agent, Gyantse and officer-in-charge, Indian Mission, Lhasa, 1947-50; author of *Tibet and its History* (1962) and *A Cultural History of Tibet* (1968).

¹³ Richardson in his note of 15 June 1949 underlined the importance of Tibet's new status with the Communists taking control of China; thought that Tibetan officials would resist Communists insisting upon any major change; underlined the need for further reforms in Tibet to which less attention was being paid; stated that Tibet would look for support from the Indian Mission specially because the Chinese might suggest that the Indian Mission be wound up; and suggested that India should insist on continuing its mission in Lhasa and continue the supply of arms and material help to Tibet.

¹⁴ K.P.S. Menon in his note of 4 July 1949 agreed with Richardson's observations and emphasized the need for the Indian Mission to continue the arms and ammunition supply by India implemented and the finding out of "other ways" to "give our moral support to Tibet" and the strengthening of India's northern frontiers.

¹⁵ G.S. Bajpai in his note of 6 July 1949 stated that any aid to Tibet should not be taken by Communists as provocation and laid stress on "social and economic reform in Tibet" and

territory. That in itself would be a provocation and it would have bad international reactions.

Whatever may be the ultimate fate of Tibet in relation to China, I think there is practically no chance of any military danger to India arising from any possible change in Tibet. Geographically, this is very difficult and practically it would be a foolish adventure. If India is to be influenced or an attempt made to bring pressure on her, Tibet is not the route for it.

I do not think there is any necessity at present for our Defense Ministry or any part of it, to consider possible military repercussions on the Indo-Tibetan frontier. The event is remote and may not arise at all. Any present thought being given to it will affect the balance we are trying to create in India. It may also not remain a secret and that would be unfortunate.

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Role of Chinese Officials in Lhasa¹⁶

Reference correspondence ending with your cypher telegram No. 55 dated 18th July.

2. We are concerned over the Tibetan Government's decision to turn out all Chinese officials in Lhasa.¹⁷ These officials were appointed by the National Government of China. Their wholesale expulsion will naturally be regarded as an anti-Chinese rather than anti-Communist move. And the Government of India, by letting them into India without any travel papers in contravention of all passport regulations, will be regarded as privy to this move.

3. We can however understand the desire of the Tibetan Government to

precautionary military measures for the defense of our own frontier."

¹⁶ Cable to Harishwar Dayal. Political Officer in Sikkim, New Delhi, 26 July 1949 J.N. Collection.

¹⁷ It was reported that the Head of Tibetan State Department at Lhasa had cut off the Nationalist Radio Station in Lhasa on 8 July 1949, asked the Nationalist Government's branch office to close down and ordered all officers to leave.

get rid of persons suspected of subversive tendencies and officials sympathizing with them. From the Tibetan Government's own point of view it would seem better for Tibetans to expel these suspects rather than all Chinese officials in Lhasa. There are many difficulties in the way of the Government of India receiving and King after these suspects. Nevertheless, in view of our friendly relations with the Tibetan Government, we are considering the possibility of giving them passage. We would be gravely embarrassed if they stayed in India. We shall require advance information of the names and particulars of the persons concerned, some indication of the charges against them, and the place or places to which they will proceed. The Government of India cannot of course undertake any financial liability in this matter.

4. We suggest that unless you or Richardson have any further comments the position of the Government of India should be tactfully explained to the Tibetan Government. The Tibetan Government are the best judges of their own interests but to us it would seem unwise on their part to take any steps which in effect mean the forced discontinuance of the Chinese Mission in Lhasa. The objects of the Tibetan Government will be served by expelling the suspects and officials associated with them. If any of the Chinese, left behind, indulge in objectionable activities they can also be similarly dealt with. Such gradual and considered action will appear justified in the eyes of the world, but not the precipitate action now contemplated.

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To Sri Krishna Sinha¹⁸

New Delhi
July 11, 1949

My dear Premier,

Thank you for your letter of the 4th July.¹⁹ In this you ask me as to what

¹⁸ File No. 18(53)-NEF/49. M.E.A., N.A.I. Also available in J.N. Collection.

policy

you should pursue regarding Nepal. I have already indicated that our policy must be to allow full freedom to any constitutional and peaceful agitation against the Nepalese Government. When such agitation becomes violent or illegal, we should intervene but not before.

No Nepal official should be permitted to make any arrests after crossing the border into Bihar. It does not matter whether the person concerned is a political absconder or even a criminal. It is entirely against international law for any such arrest by a foreign official or police to take place. All that a foreign government can do is to ask for extradition and the normal procedure for extradition should be gone through. In the case of political offences there is no extradition. In this matter there should be no weakening on our side and every single instance of the Nepal officials coming across our country to arrest anyone is a matter to which we can never agree and you must report it to us for such action as we may think proper.

As for the press, it is unfortunate that it should behave in the manner it is doing.²⁰ We can have no objection to any newspaper agitating for democratic reforms in Nepal. But to suggest that Nepal should be merged into India and should suffer the same fate as the other Indian States is a dangerous line and must be discouraged.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

¹⁹ In his letter Sinha reported that several meetings on the Bihar side of the Nepal border were being held to express sympathy with the democratic movement in Nepal. "One or two reports of arrest by the Nepal officials of the political absconders on Bihar border have come but in the delicate state of our relationship with Nepal we have not thought it advisable to make much fuss over the matter."

²⁰ The Premier asked Nehru if "any particular policy should be suggested through the Press Advisory Committee to be followed in respect of Nepal affairs" as the press in Bihar had not only been giving publicity to happenings in Nepal but *Searchlight* even suggested that Nepal "would have to share the same fate as other Indian States."