

## Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru

*Series II, Volume 14*

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### **On a No War Declaration<sup>1</sup>**

Jawaharlal Nehru: The old policy of India under British rule was recognition of the autonomy of Tibet and vaguely, recognising the suzerainty of China over Tibet, subject to that autonomy.<sup>2</sup> It is all rather vague in the sense that is not precisely put down. There is a certain treaty-I forget the year now –which laid down this policy and which was not finally, I think, signed by China. It remained in the air so far as China was concerned. We accepted it and Tibet also accepted it. So that you have to take the two together - that is, that there is a certain autonomy of Tibet and a vague suzerainty of China attached to it. But conditions have changed a lot since then. The real question that arises, I suppose, is Tibet's international relations. I do not suppose that the present Chinese Government wants to deprive Tibet of local autonomy. At any rate they say they do not wish to deprive it. But how far Tibet can have relations with other countries, I do not know.

*Q: What is the status of Tibet? Has she any diplomatic status?*

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<sup>1</sup> Press Conference at Delhi, 6 January, 1950. File No. 43(102)50-PMS.

<sup>2</sup> In 1914, Chinese, Tibetan and British representatives at Shimla initialled a draft agreement on the basis of Tibetan autonomy subject to nominal Chinese suzerainty. But, while expressly admitting Tibetan autonomy, the Chinese failed to ratify the agreement.

JN: It has a definite diplomatic status. Our representative there- I do not know what he is called –definitely deals with the Tibetan authorities.

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### **Solution by Meditation<sup>3</sup>**

Q: Are we recognising new China immediately or are we deferring recognition along with Mr. Bevin and Mr. Acheson?<sup>4</sup>

JN: Neither, i.e. we shall recognise China when we have consulted our representative<sup>5</sup> who has just come here-and arrived at our own conclusion about the matter. We communicate with and consult other countries but the decision is ours and the time for decision is ours.

*Q: What will be the position of Tibet in relation to India?*

JN: About the position of Tibet, I may say that for the last 40 years or so, that is to say, during the regime of the British in India, a certain autonomy of Tibet was recognised by the then movement of India and there were direct relations between Tibet and India.

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<sup>3</sup> Press Conference, New Delhi, 16 November 1949. The P.I.B version is printed.

<sup>4</sup> During his visit to the U.S.A., Nehru had touched on the question of the recognition of the people's Government of China. He had pointed out the need for recognising "realities" India herself recognised the "reality" after Nehru's return home, On 30 December 1949, this decision was taken in consultation with other members of the Commonwealth. India, in fact, pressed for an early recognition of the Communist Chinese Government and did not wish to wait for U.S. action. See also Selected Works, (Second series), Vol. 13.pp.297-299.

<sup>5</sup> K.M. Panikkar

As regards China's position in Tibet, a vague kind of suzerainty was recognised. All these things were never clearly defined as to what the position was, matters remained vague and they have remained vague in that way. We have a representative in Lhasa. We trade with them directly but in a vague sense we have accepted the fact of China's suzerainty. How far it goes, one does not know.

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### **Letters to Chief Ministers<sup>6</sup>**

All the border countries of China are affected by these developments. India is not directly affected in the sense of any military danger. It is possible that the Chinese Communist regime may spread to Tibet, though that is unlikely before the summer of next year<sup>7</sup>. Even if it so spreads, there is no military danger from that quarter to India. The best guarantee of India's safety from that frontier is the inhospitable terrain and climate of Tibet as well as the mountains that separate Tibet from India. Our policy has been rather vague about Tibet. It has been an inheritance from British days. We have recognised the autonomy of Tibet under some kind of vague suzerainty of China. Strictly speaking, in law, we cannot deny that suzerainty. We would like Tibet to be autonomous and to have direct dealings with us and we shall press for this. But it is clear that we cannot bring any effective pressure to change the course of events in Tibet. Therefore, we must be cautious about the steps that we might take so as not to get

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<sup>6</sup> File No. 25(6)-49/PMS

<sup>7</sup> India considered Tibet as a buffer State guaranteeing the security of India and China and facilitating friendly relations between the two along a mountainous border of 2000 miles.

entangled in enterprises which are beyond our strength. We have accepted certain facts as they are. I emphasise this aspect as there is often vague talk about India doing this or that in other countries, regardless of the obvious factors in each case. One thing is dead clear. We will not permit the slightest intervention, aggression or invasion of any Indian territory wherever it might be.

13. We are concerned with some of our border countries or States. Bhutan and Sikkim may be considered as definite parts of India from this point of view. Nepal is not. But it is too intimately related to India for us to view with unconcern what happens there internally or externally. During the last two years or more, we have been constantly pressing the Government of Nepal to take a realistic view of the situation in all its aspects. We have urged major domestic reforms as that is the only way to strengthen the country. Now, with the development of the Chinese situation, the internal and external forces of Nepal have become of even greater importance to us. Any threat to Nepal ultimately becomes a threat to us.

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### **Salient Features of India's Foreign Policy**

Among the other countries round about us, obviously the nearest of our neighbours which is affecting our present life is Pakistan. I shall refer to our relations with Pakistan at some greater length at a later stage. Among the other countries there is Nepal, almost geographically a part of India, though an independent nation. Recently we had a visit of the Prime Minister of Nepal here in India<sup>8</sup>. We welcomed this

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<sup>8</sup> Mohun Shamsher, the Nepalese Prime Minister, visited Delhi on 17 February 1950 to discuss with Indian leaders matters relating to mutual security problems arising

distinguished person and we conferred with him, and it was clear that so far as certain important matters were concerned, so far as certain developments in Asia were concerned, the interests of Nepal and India were identical. We are interested of course in the development of freedom in all countries, more especially in Asian countries. We are interested in the abstract and we are interested in that as a practical and necessary step today in the context of Asia, because of it does not come it creates and encourages those very forces that are moving in the world-the democratic forces, the forces of freedom-and to put oneself in line with them, because not to do so is only wrong according to modern ideas but unwise according to what is happening in the world today. It is clear, as I said that in regard to certain important matters, the interests of Nepal and India are inevitably joined up. For instance, if I mention it, it is not possible for any Indian Government to tolerate any invasion of Nepal from anywhere. It is not necessary for us to have a military alliance with Nepal. We do not go about having military alliances with any country. We have none. But apart from any pact or alliance, the fact remains that we cannot tolerate any foreign invasion, from any foreign country, or of any part of this Indian sub-continent or whatever you may like to call it. Any possible invasion of Nepal would inevitably involve the safety of India. May I add that I have not the slightest apprehension of any invasion of Nepal? I am merely stating a fact. I do not think any such invasion of Nepal is easily possible, nor do I think it is at all likely. But I wish to make this clear to the House and to others what our policy in such matters is bound to be.

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out of China's claim over Tibet. The Nepalese Prime Minister returned to Kathmandu with the draft of a treaty of peace and friendship which was concluded between the two countries on 31 July 1950.

...Then I come to the great country, China. Very great changes, revolutionary changes, have taken place in that country and some people may approve of them and some may not. It is not a question of approving or disapproving; it is a question of recognising a major event in history and of appreciating it and dealing with it. Because of this, nearly three months ago or less, when it was quite clear that the new Chinese Government was in possession of practically the entire mainland of China, when it was quite clear that this Government was a stable Government and that there was no force which was likely to supplant it or to push it away, we offered recognition to this new Government and suggested that we might exchange diplomatic missions. Since then events have progressed rather slowly, partly it may be due to the fact that certain important members of that Government were away from their own country, In any event, the present position is this, that there is a general agreement about such an exchange and a representative of our who used to be a Secretary to our Embassy in Nanking has proceeded to Peking to discuss certain matters of detail with the Peking Government. I hope that before long Ambassadors will be exchanged and then we can deal with each other properly through those Ambassadors.

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### **Issues Of Foreign Policy<sup>9</sup>**

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<sup>9</sup> Proceedings of the meeting of the Standing Committee of the Central Legislature for the Ministry of External Affairs, 17 December 1949. Jawaharlal Nehru was in the Chair. The members present were S.V. Krishnamurthy Rao, Begum Aizaz Rasul, Thirumala Rao, Girija Shankar Guha, Renuka Ray, N.G. Ranga and Srinivasa Mallayya. File No.46-70 /49 –BC I (B), M.E.A., N.A.I.

The Prime Minister explained that the recognition of the new Government in China by India was inevitable. The question was only one of timing. The question had been discussed with the U.K., U.S.A., Burma, Siam, Commonwealth countries and others and the only difference of opinion was regarding the time at which recognition should be accorded.<sup>10</sup> Recognition does not necessarily involve approval or disapproval of the form of Government but is necessary because China is a big country and our neighbour. Also admittedly, for the first time, a strong and stable Government exists in China. Although we have hardly any common trade interests, we must recognise it and normal relations must be established. The United Kingdom have been anxious to recognise it for the last two or three months partly because of business interests.<sup>11</sup> They also want to hold on to Hong Kong but that question is to be settled later and there is no danger of immediate war over Hong Kong.

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<sup>10</sup> Burma recognised People's China on 9 December 1949, followed by India on 30 December and Pakistan on 4 January 1950 and Britain, Sri Lanka and Norway on 6 January. They were followed by Denmark and Israel on 9 January, Finland and Afghanistan on 13 January and Sweden by 14 January 1950.

<sup>11</sup> The United Kingdom was anxious to recognise the Government of Communist China without delay. Her interests in the Chinese mainland were different from those of other countries. Hong Kong, her colony, was surrounded by Communist territory. The interests of British industrialists and merchants in China were very important. She had, therefore, to recognise whatever Government ruled over the Chinese mainland.

The Prime Minister said that none knows what will happen in Tibet<sup>12</sup>. If the Chinese wish to enter Tibet, there is none to hold them back expect, perhaps, the climate. There is no danger to India of anyone sweeping down over the Himalayas. There is no danger of invasion of Assam or Nepal. The Government of China will not evoke a conflict with India or anyone else but it is possible that guerrilla bands, irregulars or fifth columnists will start working. It is therefore, necessary for the regime to be recognised so that such questions can be effectively taken up and dealt with through normal channels.

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<sup>12</sup> The Chinese had for centuries been claiming, and at times exercising, suzerainty over Tibet, the extent of Chinese control over Tibet, the extent of Chinese control being dependent on the strength of the Central Government in China. The Kuomintang had also maintained a mission in Lhasa. When the Chinese communists assumed power they proclaimed Tibet to be an integral part of China. They were suspicious about alleged alien activity in Tibet which aimed at repudiating Chinese authority over Tibet. The Chinese appeared to suspect that India was abetting these activities. India inherited from Britain the rights to station an Indian political Agent at Lhasa, to maintain trade agencies at Gyantse, Gartok, and Yatung, and posts and telegraph offices along the trade route up to Gyantse and the right to station a small military escort at Gyantse to protect this commercial highway. India wanted to preserve her trade and cultural interests in Tibet but not these territorial rights.