

Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru

Series II, Volume 17 II

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To Bisnuram Medhi¹

New Delhi

March 13, 1952

My dear Medhi,²

Thank you for your letter of March 9th

I was surprised to read it. I do not remember your complaining to me previously on this subject.

The Tribal Areas in Assam have become far more important for us than they ever were before, because of developments in Tibet. They are a vital frontier for us and we have to give a great deal of attention to them and to the border. What is likely to happen in the distant future, I do not know, but it is quite clear that these areas must remain under the direct charge of the Government of India as border areas for some considerable time.

In these areas there are several kinds of problems. One is that of internal administration or rather of opening them out for administration. The other is the strictly frontier problem. So far as the latter is concerned, it is almost a military problem and has to be dealt with on a top-secret level. Even our Cabinet here is not informed of details there. We receive information about happenings on either side of the border and have to Issue instructions frequently as to what should be done and what should not be done.

¹ J.N. Collection. Also available in Bisnuram Mehdi Papers, N.M.M.L.

² Chief Minister of Assam at this time.

To the King of Nepal³

4- I have read with great interest Your Majesty's proposal for a coordination of the defence plan and foreign policy of Nepal with those of India. I entirely agree with you that this is vitally important for the safety and security of Nepal, as it is for India. Indeed, it is a natural development of the good neighbourly policy which both our Countries have sought to pursue.

5- I gladly accept, therefore, this approach and my Government would be entirely willing to consider these important matters relating to a coordinated policy of defence and foreign affairs of Nepal and India. To a certain extent, this has been taking place during the past year. As Your Majesty is aware, our Governments have conferred about relations with Tibet and China. We have also discussed frontier problems and some of our staff officers have visited Nepal to confer with representatives of Your Majesty's Government in regard to these and defence problems.

6- We would be happy to enter into further discussions on these subjects. While these discussions are in progress, we can endeavour to coordinate our policies in the largest measure. I would suggest that the best course would be for your Prime Minister to pay a visit to Delhi to have a preliminary discussion in regard to these important matters with us. That discussion should lead to further steps and a fuller consideration of some details.

The Situation in Nepal

Q: There was a recent announcement that the administration had been

³ J.N. Collection

extended up to the McMahon Line. What exactly does that involve? And is there any implication of joint administration and joint defence of the north-east border?

JN: Joint? With whom?

Q: *With Nepal.*

JN: The McMahon Line has nothing to do with Nepal. It is above Darjeeling. It has to do with Assam chiefly. So, Nepal has nothing to do with it. The McMahon Line came up when we discussed India's frontier with China and Tibet long years ago.⁴ The Nepalese part of the frontier did not come into the picture. The McMahon Line is the frontier, but on this side of the McMahon Line there have been undeveloped territories-jungles, etc. You take ten day to a fortnight to reach the frontier from any administrative centre. So, all that we are doing is to improve communications there up to our frontier and to get into better touch with it.

Q: *Is it true that while Nepalese citizens in India get practically the same treatment as Indians here, we are not getting the same treatment in Nepal? We have to get a permit to go to Nepal.*

JN: I think there is some such thing. We are not attaching very great importance to it; because of conditions in Nepal we do not want to press the Nepalese to open the door to everybody. We realize their difficulties.

Q: *Has any progress been made in the demarcation of the undefined*

⁴ The McMahon Line delimiting the frontier between India and Tibet at the Shimla Convention in 1914 was however not ratified by the then Chinese Government.

border between India and China on the north-east and north-west?

JN: I do not know. The McMahon Line is a definition of that border on the north-east.

Q: There is a certain tract which is undefined so far-even on the maps it is shown as undefined-towards the north-east and north-west, between Nepal and the province of Kashmir: near Lake Manasarovar.

JN: We talk about Nepal and Kashmir, and suddenly jump into Manasarovar Lake: Kashmir does not come into the picture. It is Himachal Pradesh and the U.P. I do not know that any question has arisen; it has not come up before me at all at any time.

Q: But even on the maps it is shown as an undefined border.

JN: Maybe. All these are high mountains. Nobody lives there. It is not very necessary to define these things.

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To M.A. Rauf⁵

New Delhi

January 27, 1952

My dear Rauf,

Your telegram No. 17 dated 26th January to Dutt.⁶

⁵ J.N. Collection.

⁶ Rauf, Indian ambassador in Burma, reported that according to Burmese sources, though there was no indication of reinforcement of Kuomintang troops in Burma, there had been persistent rumours of supplies being brought to them. He added that Burma had reinforced

I find that a number of British newspaper correspondents are, whether intentionally or not I do not know, creating a lot of mischief. The other day *The Statesman* here published a report about the Chinese claiming Badrinath in the Himalayas.⁷ This was telegraphed to London and appeared in the British papers. leading articles were written about it. We contradicted it of course, but the mischief was done.

This story of Badrinath was fantastic in the extreme. No one with any knowledge could give credence to it. How a responsible paper can publish such a ridiculous story, we cannot understand. *The Statesman* said that they had received the message from a correspondent in Kalimpong. Kalimpong is notorious for its spies of all kinds and all countries. It is a factory of rumour. I am mentioning, this because I was reminded of this when I learnt of the *London Observer* correspondent sending a message from Rangoon about the K.M.T. troops. This kind of message obviously does some harm to Burma's cause. Whether it is deliberately meant to do so or not, I do not know. There seems to be an attempt to create trouble between India and China and Burma and China.

It might be worthwhile for you to draw the attention of the Burmese Ministers rather informally to this aspect. One of them or their officials might well send for the newspaper correspondent in question and tell him that such wrong messages are very objectionable. Even a warning might have some effect

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

its troops in the Shan states to counter further trouble.

⁷ It was reported in the press that Tibet had claimed the Badrinath shrine in the Himalayas as a part of its territory. On 17 January 1952, the Ministry of External Affairs in a statement described the report as not only 'totally incorrect' but 'fantastic'.

To Thakin Nu⁸

New Delhi,
January 27, 1952

My dear Thakin Nu,

Our Ambassador in Rangoon informed me that you would like Sardar Panikkar to break his journey in Rangoon on his way back to Peking. I have gladly agreed to this and am asking Panikkar to do so. He will be proceeding direct from Rangoon to Peking.

During Panikkar's stay here we have of course discussed with him many matters concerning the relations of India with china. These relations are friendly and I believe it is the desire of the Chinese Government, as it is our desire, to continue to maintain them in as friendly a manner as possible. inevitably, owing to new developments in Tibet and elsewhere a number of points arise for discussion and determination. These are, however not such as are likely to create any difficulty and we hope to arrive at conclusions which are mutually satisfactory. I hope that this may lead to a settlement of many outstanding questions between Burma and china.

All these problems have of course to be viewed in the larger context of a developing world situation. I fear there has been no improvement in that situation either in the Far East or in Europe. All that can be said is that there is no near prospect of big scale war, but the acute tensions continue and the respective viewpoints of the two big blocs of power appear to be irreconcilable. More and more it becomes clear that the general policy, which Burma and India have adopted, of keeping free from entanglements is a sound one. This is not always easy to pursue and we have constantly to face difficult decisions. But there is no sound alternative to this policy and I have no doubt that we should continue to pursue it.

⁸ J.N. Collection.

We sent Panikkar to the General Assembly of the United Nations and this enabled him to gain an insight into the Western area of conflict. This largely centres round the future of Germany and the question of rearmament. Thus both in Germany and Japan the question of rearmament becomes an important and highly explosive issue.

Some days ago an item of news appeared in the British press about the renewed activities of the Kuomintang troops on the Burma- China border. We referred this matter to our Ambassador in Rangoon. In his reply he has stated that no new development has recently taken place although of course the whole position continues to be unsatisfactory and your Government is paying full attention to it. In this connection I should like to draw your attention to the way some foreign correspondents send messages to their papers which are sometimes devoid of foundation and often grossly exaggerated. What their purpose is I do not know. I am inclined to think that they want to create trouble between India and China or Burma and China. We have had one fantastic message like this which appeared in one of the Delhi papers. There is no truth in it but it was flashed across to the U.K. and U.S.A. and there were leading articles about it.

I think that when any such message appears the newspaper correspondent should be pulled up. If it is a serious matter even the Ambassador concerned might be told about it.

As you must know, we have been in the midst of our general elections which have been on a colossal scale. The number of voters on our rolls were about 175 millions. The organization itself was on a vast scale. On the whole these elections have been conducted efficiently and peacefully. The results will not be complete for some weeks to come. Probably in another two weeks' time we shall know the picture. This has been a very big democratic experiment, bigger than any held elsewhere at any time. Much has happened during the elections which has not been to our liking and we shall have to give serious thought to many matters. So far as our Central Parliament is concerned,

there is little doubt that we shall have a very considerable majority.

Difficulties however will arise in some of our States.

The one big lesson of these elections has been that it is essential for, intimate contacts to be kept up between the Government and the people. I am afraid that during the last three or four years we did not pay enough attention to this matter.

With all good wishes to you,

Yours very sincerely,

Jawaharlal Nehru

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Relations with China and Tibet⁹

Question: There are certain differences outstanding between India and China, on boundary trade, and our Mission at Lhasa¹⁰. Can you tell us something about it?

Jawaharlal Nehru: They are outstanding only in the sense that they are there. Our boundaries are there and we are having no trouble with our boundary. So far as our mission or trade with Tibet is concerned, our mission is there and our trade continues. It is true that it is desirable to remove any doubt if there is any. In course of time that will be done by friendly talks with the Government of China They are not coming in the way of anything.

Q Have you any information that trade to India from Tibet has been diverted

⁹ Remarks at a press conference, New Delhi, 3 November 1951, Press Information Bureau.

¹⁰ Consequent upon the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1950 there were uncertainties as regard to the functions of the Indian mission in Lhasa, awaiting a final settlement of the Sino-Tibetan dispute and India's recognition of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet.

*to China by almost 80%. I have positive information about it.*¹¹

Jawaharlal Nehru: There are our trade representatives, and if there is any doubt about it, no doubt it will be solved by friendly talks with the Chinese Government. We talk about trade, it is not so much any particular question but rather what has been happening in Tibet in the last few months.

Previously there was a partial stoppage. or lessening of trade with India. I have an idea that it is growing again and that things are settling down, but it may well happen, of course, that part of the trade may be diverted; it is quite possible.

About maps, I may tell you something that I have not told you before, and that is this. All the maps used in China at present are very old maps and in fact, we were told by the Chinese Government not to pay the slightest attention to these maps. They are their old maps and they have no time to print them anew; they are simply carrying on with them because they are too busy with other things.

Q: Was there any approach made to the Government or was there any contact with Tibetan traders or some of their representative who stated that if the wool which comes to Tibet is not diverted from India then this trade might flow into India?

JN: I do not remember any such thing. I have no recollection at all of it, and so far as wool is concerned, we absorb it completely and we want much more.

Q: The wool is bought by die Americans.

¹¹ A 17 Point Agreement was arrived between China and Tibet on 23 May 1951, by virtue of which China established its economic hold over Tibet. A branch of the bank of China was set

JN: I do not know.

Q: Is it a fact that the Chinese Cultural Mission has cancelled its visit to Kashmir as a protest against the Kashmir State's decision to give shelter to Kazaks, and if so, may I know if the Government have received any communication from China about it or was there any sort of protest?

JN: We have received no communication from the Government of China. When the Mission came or a day or two before they came,¹² they revised their programme and left out the visit to Kashmir and I believe it had something to do with the Kazaks who had come in, but we have not officially received any protest or anything to that effect.

Q: Have these Kazaks come from Sinkiang or the supposed Russian territory or somewhere?

JN: I do not know really but many of them, I suppose, are from Sinkiang, coming through Tibet.

Q: Has your attention been drawn to a proposal for an Asian Conference under the initiative of China, and if so, what is your attitude towards this?

JN: My attention has not been drawn to that. I have not heard of it.

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up in Lhasa and the bulk of the Indo-Tibetan trade was diverted to China.

¹² A twenty-one member delegation led by Ting Si-tin arrived at Calcutta on 28 October 1951 and during a month-long tour visited Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh.

To B.N. Rau¹³)

New Delhi

November 6, 1951

My dear B.N.,

Panikkar¹⁴ is going to Paris in a day or two and will probably meet you before you get this letter. I am sending him to join your Delegation because I think that his intimate knowledge of the Far Eastern problem, and more particularly of China, should be utilized by us in a wider sphere. Also because I want him to balance his own outlook by having a look at the Western world and meeting people there.

Both China and the U.S. and, to some extent, Western Europe live in worlds apart with little understanding of each other. China at present is cut off from news of the outside world. To some extent this is true of the U.S. and Western Europe in regard to China. And yet what has happened in China is of major consequence in world affairs. Much of the trouble that has happened during the past two years has been due to a lack of appreciation of the emergence of a new great power in the Far East.

Panikkar's visit to the West may help somewhat in making people in the West realize the significance of what is happening in China. I confess I do not have a very high opinion of the collective wisdom of the delegates to the U.N. They function in their own little world and repeat the same jargon without even trying to understand what is happening about them. Still it is possible that some glimmering of understanding might come to them.

I am overwhelmingly busy with the election work at present. But I shall keep in touch with developments in the UN

Shaikh Ahdullah will probably go to Paris later in the month. One of his deputies might precede him.

¹³ B.N. Rau Papers, N.M.M.L

¹⁴ K.M. Panikkar was the Indian Ambassador in China.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

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Cable to B.N. Rau¹⁵⁾

Your telegram No.3 of 7th November.¹⁶ It would be inconsistent with our policy and past record to vote against proposal for inclusion in the agenda of item on representation of China in United Nations. Even though proposal may be defeated, I think we should vote for it.

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China and Tibet¹⁷

Question: What is the position of the Indian Mission in Lhasa?

Jawaharlal Nehru: At present it is exactly the same as it was. It dealt with certain trade and cultural matters more or less. Of course there is not too much trade and it continues to be there. It never had any diplomatic status technically.

Q: Has there been any infiltration of Chinese troops in Tibet?

JN: Not that I am aware of.

¹⁵ New Delhi, 8 November 1951. File on the question of admission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations. p.34. M.E.A., Government of India

¹⁶ Rau had sought Nehru's advice regarding support for the Soviet proposal on China's entry into the UN. He felt that since the motion was certain to be defeated if put to vote, it might be judicious to abstain from voting on the motion.

¹⁷ Remarks at a press conference. New Delhi, 28 February 1952. Press Information Bureau. For other parts of the conference, see pp. 153-157, 167-169, 181-273, 276, 338-342, 414-416, 446-448, 474-477, 492, 529-530, 557-560 and 643..

...Q: When Sardar Panikkar was here, he told a foreign correspondent that he had brought an invitation to you from the President of the Republic of China, Mao Tse-tung, and that you had received it, he also said it might be possible for you to pay a short visit. Is it possible now?

JN: I have received no formal invitation. But it is true that, informally, I have been informed through our Ambassador in China that a visit of mine to China would be welcomed. I would like to go to China very much, but I am afraid that it is just not possible for me to go in the near future. I do not know about the distant future. But we intend sending a cultural mission to China in the course of the next two months or so.¹⁸

Q: About the cultural mission, how would you select delegates? I am referring to the journalist delegates especially.

JN: We could hardly have a plebiscite for the purpose!

Q: There are two recognised organisations of journalists. One is wider than the All-India Newspaper Editors' Conference, and that is the Federation of Working Journalists. Would you allow them to come into the picture?

JN: I do not know about this particular matter. But obviously the Union of Working Journalists is a representative and important body.

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¹⁸ A delegation of fourteen members headed by Vijayalakshmi Pandit left for China On 26 April 1952.

Cable to K.M. Panikkar¹⁹

I have been following with anxious interest recent developments in Korea and China²⁰ and have seen telegrams you have sent. The position now created is an exceedingly dangerous one and, unless something is done to improve it, might well lead to the world war which we all dread and wish to avoid.

2. I realize that in the state of present excitement and passion. any kind of intervention by a third party is not likely to produce results and might even lead to irritation. Nevertheless, the issues are so grave that it seems improper to remain quiescent and not to make an effort to stop this drift to catastrophe. How best this is to be done it is for you to consider. You may yourself make another approach or Vijayalakshmi, when she goes to Peking next month, might do so, or both courses might be adopted.

3. Chinese charges²¹ against Americans are of the most serious nature and if true they are horrible indeed. I find it exceedingly difficult to believe that any country can be guilty of them. Americans deny them completely and ask for an impartial investigation.²² In such a case it is clear that any opinion of one side only or a unilateral denunciation cannot possibly convince others. A repetition of denunciation by partisan organizations does not add to the truth or value of evidence. I can understand insistence on impartiality of investigation but to deny any investigation, except one's own, is the

¹⁹ New Delhi, 17 March 1952. J.N. Collection.

²⁰ In February 1952, negotiations for a truce in Korea had reached a stage where an agreement seemed plausible. But soon the talks broke down following the Chinese allegation that 'he United States had taken recourse to bacteriological warfare in areas under North Korean control.

²¹ The Chinese Government had alleged that between 25 February and 5 March 1952, 448 U.S planes had flown over Manchuria causing germ-warfare.

²² On 4 March 1952. the u.s. US Secretary of State, Dean Acheson stated that the Chinese allegations were 'entirely false' and sought impartial investigation by an international agency such as the Red Cross.

surest way of making others doubt the validity of the charge.

4. This new development is likely to put an end to all chances of cease-fire in Korea. There can then be no question of settling any issue in the Far East, including that of Formosa, by peaceful methods. War thus becomes inevitable with all its dreadful and uncertain consequences.

5. It is perfectly true that there are groups in America who continue to support publicly Chiang Kai-shek and who talk of invasion of China. It is equally true that powerful elements in America are entirely opposed to this policy and would like Chiang Kai-shek to fade out of the picture.

Unfortunately the approach of the American Presidential election makes it difficult for the U.S. Government and others to take up a stronger line which they might otherwise have done. I am myself convinced that the U.S.

Government is anxious to avoid war and will go far to find some way of settlement in Far East. If once fighting ceased in Korea, the way would be opened for better understanding and Chiang Kai-shek would die a natural political death. The U.K. Government, in spite of Tory diehards, is anxious for settlement in Far East. The question therefore is whether we should seek peaceful settlement or take a step which plays into hands of diehards and makes large-scale conflict inevitable.

6. For your information I might inform you that we have had long talks with U.S. Ambassador here, Chester Bowles, and Mrs Roosevelt, both of whom are earnestly desirous of good relations between China and America.

7. It appears essential therefore from every point of view that charges of bacteriological warfare should be independently investigated. To refuse this cannot possibly be to the advantage of China in the eyes of large parts of the world which are friendly to China. The method of impartial investigation can be considered. Possibly both parties or China and the UN, can name some experts and the Chairman can be chosen by the nominees of the two

sides. If Peking has evidence,²³ it should not hesitate to have such an investigation.

8 I see no other way. Certainly war will not prove anything or solve anything and can only bring terrible disaster to all concerned. Prestige counts with nations but right action and the goodwill of the world are more important and indeed enhance prestige. There can be no possible loss of prestige by agreeing to a proper impartial investigation.

9. If such investigation supports charges put forward by Chinese Government, that would strengthen Chinese position tremendously and would be a greater victory than any war or one-sided denunciation can possibly bring. Even the people of America will be powerfully influenced, Not to have such an investigation would mean continuance of doubt and uncertainty and a feeling among large numbers of people that the right course was not taken and thereby B third world war was precipitated. I am sure that China with her intense desire for peace cannot possibly want such a result.

10 I leave it to you to deal with the situation in view of what I have said above. We have often hesitated to intervene lest we be misunderstood. B~ the risks are too great and I feel that the Chinese Government should realize fully how we feel and what the possible consequences might be.

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Cable to K.M. Panikkar²⁴)

Your telegram 73 dated March 19th²⁵. I note that you intend taking early

²³ *The People's Daily*, Beijing. of 15 March 1952 published photographs allegedly claiming to prove germ warfare. On the same day. Beijing Radio announced that a Commission of 70 persons headed by the resident, Chinese Red Cross Society had found ample proof in support of their allegation of use of germ warfare in North-East China and Korea.

²⁴ New Delhi. 20 March 1952. J.N. Collection.

opportunity of talking to Chou En-lai. I think that it is desirable for you to convey to him then my own deep interest in the matter on the lines indicated in my previous telegram.²⁶ I am anxious that whatever attitude the Chinese Government take up should appear as reasonable and justifiable by independent neutral opinion. I am afraid that organizations you suggest are not considered independent by most of those people just as Chinese do not consider Europeans as neutral. But surely it should be possible to find neutrals whom the Chinese Government can accept. They may be scientists or others. They may be non-Europeans or they can be a mixed commission partly nominated by China as suggested in paragraph 7 of my previous telegram. Lawyers are hardly competent to judge a question of science. To reject *ab initio* proposal of neutral commission seems unreasonable. I can understand personnel being discussed or varied.

2. Your approach to Chou En-lai should be informal but I think it is desirable that you should indicate to him how I feel in the matter.

²⁵ Panikkar had conveyed the Chinese suspicion regarding inquiry by any neutral body sponsored by the United States. since they believed that "all Europeans are prejudiced and unneutral with regard to China. Recognizing the validity of the argument that it was necessary to set up an inquiry by a reputed neutral body. the Chinese Government had proposed to secure the services of international Democratic Lawyers' Association. Panikkar, suggested as an alternative. a body of scientists of known integrity, selected from the USSR and Britain, to go into the matter.

²⁶ See the preceding item