

Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru

Series II, Volume 18

Page 13

The Zamindari System and Beyond¹

1 July 1952

We have large rivers in our country. So there is no shortage of water. The river water flow into the seas and are wasted. Why should we not utilize them through canals for irrigation so that we do not have to depend on the monsoons? There are many such canals in Punjab. We are taking up huge river valley projects all over the country. You must have heard of the Bhakra Nangal which has come up on the river Sutlej which originates in Tibet near Mansarovar and Kailash and comes to India flowing through the mountains. We have built a huge dam on the Sutlej. Here electricity will be produced and the canals will carry waters up to Rajasthan, where the deserts will bloom. There are river valley projects in Bihar and Bengal on the Damodar river, and the Mahanadi in Orissa. Hundreds of thousands of acres of land can be brought under irrigation and food production will be stepped up. Electricity can also be generated.

Page 22

Building a New India²

¹ Speech at Modi Nagar, 1 July 1952, NMML. Original in Hindi. Extracts.

² Speech at a public meeting under the auspices of the Delhi State Congress Committee, New Delhi, 6 July 1952. AIR tapes. NMML. Original in Hindi. Extracts.

6 July 1952

India spreads from the tip of Sri Lanka and Kanya Kumari in the South to the very heart of the vast continent of Asia. There are great diversities in matters like language and way of life of the people. In Kashmir and Ladakh, the climate is extremely cold even when it is the height of summer in the rest of the country. You can imagine what it is like in winter. People cannot live there without long boots lined with fur or wool, whether they are rich or poor. All this is part of India. How then can we hope to enforce anything by force or coercion without taking into account the different kinds of problems which exist? Ladakh and Kashmir lie on the borders of Tibet and Turkey and other countries. We cannot apply the same yardstick that obtains in Travancore, Madras or Calcutta. It is just not possible. This is not the way to run a vast country like ours. I agree that there has to be a fundamental unity in the midst of diversity. And how, we are considering these issues and will find a solution in due course. Nothing can be achieved by making a noise. I have told you all this because I wanted you to understand the problem and also because there is a hue and cry about it.

Page 267

The Demand for Linguistic Provinces³

7 July 1952

I do not know enough about the past or the recent history of China as to how they have dealt with this question for me to go into details about it. But, generally speaking, they have tried to get over it by

³ 7 July 1952, Parliamentary Debates: House of the People, Official Report, Volumes III, Part II, cols 3346-3361.

getting rid of the provinces themselves. I believe they have divided China into a number of what they call zones, five or six or seven or eight, whatever the number may be. Apart from two or three autonomous areas, which are Mongolia and Tibet, the rest are zones, which, presumably, cut across the old provincial boundaries. I cannot judge about China. I merely mention this because the problem is, in regard to size and provinces, much the same here. Maybe it is more difficult here or more different here. But our thinking too much in terms of anything that leads to an intensification of provincial feelings will, undoubtedly, weaken the conception of India as a whole. That is one aspect of it.

Page 366

To Bisnuram Medhi⁴

21 April 1952

The Russians after the Soviet Revolution paid very special attention to their tribal people and did not interfere with their language, customs, or way of life. In fact they went out of their way to develop the tribal languages, etc. Thus they won the goodwill of the tribal folk. The Chinese today, on the other side of our border in Tibet, are putting up Tibetan schools for the Tibetans, and not interfering with their ways.

Script for North-Eastern Tribals⁵

You were good enough to write a note to me about the language to be taught in the tribal areas in the North-East frontier Agency. You

⁴ JN Collection.

⁵ Note to the Union Minister for Education, 9 April 1952. JN Collection.

expressed your full agreement with the policy I suggested but were in some doubt about the script.

I think in this matter of script also we should abide by the local sentiment, even though this might cause some difficulty. We should consult representatives of the local population pointing out the pros and cons. If they accept the Roman script, well and good. If they want the Tibetan script, as I think they are likely to do, then we should teach the Tibetan script. We must remember that they are living on the borders of Tibet they want to deal with Tibet. They cannot do so in the Roman script. It is natural therefore for them to want to learn the Tibetan script.

Page 471

Cable to K.M.Panikkar⁶

12 April 1952

Your telegrams Nos 88 and 89 dated 6th April⁷ and 96 dated 10th April.

2. Rice supplies. Government of India are grateful to the Chinese Government for offer of 100,000 tons of rice. Food Ministry is communicating with you on this subject directly. This question should

⁶ New Delhi, 12 April 1952. JN Collection.

⁷ Panikkar, the Indian Ambassador to China, Stated that at his meeting with Chou En-lai on 5 April, the latter had expressed the view that for many years Tibet would have to depend on India for several daily necessities and desired facilities for transportation of food supplies to Tibet via Calcutta. Chou En-lai had also enquired about India's attitude to the construction of a road connecting India with Lhasa. Panikkar reported that Chou En-lai had agreed to continued supply of foodgrains to India for the whole year in exchange for certain commodities.

be kept entirely separate from provision of transit facilities to Tibet through India.

3. Roche Victoria, formerly Food Minister of Madras, has made several misstatements which are being corrected by our Food Minister in a press statement.⁸ Roche Victoria is no longer in Madras cabinet.

4. Tibet. We are surprised to learn of Chou En-lai's apparent reluctance to discuss general problem of our interests in Tibet. It was Chou En-lai himself who suggested, in September last, that this problem, as also boundary between India and Tibet, was one for discussion and settlement. We expressed readiness for this and subsequently you gave note to the Chinese Government defining our interests in Tibet. Chou En-lai's present excuse that the Chinese have been in Tibet only for a short time and have not yet studied problem thoroughly does not carry conviction.

5. We should distinguish between continuance of old border trade between India and Tibet and new proposals of trade in bulk between China and Tibet passing through India. Latter raises important problems of transit which have to be considered by several Ministries. Burden on our transport system is already heavy and we have to consider carefully any additional burden. It must be remembered also that direct route from Calcutta to Darjeeling now passes through Pakistan territory, and this leads to political complications and is causing us continuous trouble. Any other route is a roundabout one. Indeed it has only recently become feasible by opening of narrow

⁸ Munshi clarified on 12 April 1952 that at a meeting of the Food Minister he had not said that China had refused to send any foodgrains to India as had been reported in the Madras Assembly on 22 March 1952 by J.L.P. Roche Victoria, the former Madras Food Minister. What he had said was that unlike the previous year, when the Chinese had helped India by sending foodgrains, they might not be able to send any rice in 1952 due to their own difficult food position.

Assam railway link which is not enough even for our present requirements.

6. We shall welcome continuation of border trade between India and Tibet, such trade originating from one of the two countries. This has been of benefit to people of both countries, specially in frontier regions.

7. The other proposal of China trade passing through India to Tibet raises, as we have pointed out above, very difficult problems of transport. Apart from this it has certain political implications. It would probably involve Chinese agencies operating transit and other arrangements at several points inside India. It means modifying existing pattern of trade and grant of transit facilities on a large and continuous scale. We are prepared to examine this matter but this would be a concession which we should retain as a bargaining counter for negotiations for an overall settlement between China and us. It is not advantageous to us to accept such proposals piecemeal and yet have no general settlement.

8. Road from Indian border to Lhasa would be of no particular advantage to us unless that road was continued within Indian territory and trade and contacts developed between India and Tibet. We welcome communication facilities but they have to be viewed as part of general problem and settlement and not in a one-sided way.

9. Transport facilities for relatively small quantities might be possible, though even these will involve a strain upon us, but this might become a precedent and an argument for continuation of such transit across India. Presumably these food supplies are meant for Chinese army in Tibet which, from all accounts, is in great need of them. We are not particularly anxious to facilitate movement and retention of large numbers of Chinese troops in Tibet.

10. Problems of security will arise if Chinese personnel is employed in moving supplies. We would not like this to become responsibility of Chinese Agencies in India. Transport facilities in mountains are difficult and there is no effective land custom cordon.

Page 471

Desirability of Friendly Ties with China and Tibet⁹

12 April 1952

There will be no war in the world if every nation followed a policy of non-interference in the domestic affairs of sister countries. India's doors are open to all friends, but no door is open to her enemies. There is therefore a great need for ensuring border defence, maintaining national unity and increasing mutual understanding. The people living on the country's borders play an important role in determining her relations with the neighbouring countries. While they can ensure peace in their own country, they can also create troubles with the neighbouring countries. Nobody need get upset over the recent developments in Tibet.¹⁰ I would like to repeat that one of the foremost interests of India is cultivation of friendly relations with her neighbours, especially China and Tibet.

Page 471

Cable to K.M. Panikkar¹¹

⁹ Speech at a public meeting Kalimpong, 29 April 1952. From Amrita Bazar Patrika, The Hindustan Times and National Herald, 30 April 1952.

¹⁰ Chinese Communist troops were reported to have entered Lhasa and established their headquarters in its eastern suburbs.

¹¹ New Delhi, 24 May 1952. JN Collection.

12 April 1952

Reference you telegram Nos 178 and 179 of 23rd May.¹² We have agreed to grant transit facilities for food grains up to end of 1952 at the rate of 500 tons a month. Subject to weather and availability of mules we are willing to work for transport of target figure of 3,500 tones. We see little prospect, however, of achieving this, since first shipment is not likely to reach India before some time next month and bad weather may interrupt transit for a month on land journey. Two thousand five hundred tons is, therefore, the probable attainable target and it might be worthwhile explaining this to the Chinese so as to avoid future misunderstanding.

We have told you that any permanent or semi-permanent arrangements can be discussed only as a part of general settlement of our interests in Tibet. (These interests, as you know, are not confined to trade relations but involve political interests such as affirmation of the Frontier). It would be preferable not to mention this in your proposed note. We had really intended this for your information only. We are examining Chinese request for delivering at Phari instead of Yatung.

Cable to K.M. Panikkar¹³

Your telegram 210 dated June 15th Tibet.

¹² Panikkar reported that it had been made clear to the Chinese that India could not guarantee transit of any fixed quantities but would try her best to transport five hundred ton per month subject to weather conditions and availability of mules from Tibet, but entirely at the risk and cost of the Chinese Government. He suggested that India might agree to transport three thousand five hundred tons by the end of 1952 subject to favourable conditions.

¹³ New Delhi, 16 June 1952. JN Collection.

We think it is rather odd that in discussing Tibet with you Chou En-lai did not refer at all to our Frontier¹⁴. For our part, we attach more importance to this than no other matters. We are interested, as you know, not only in our direct Frontier but also in Frontiers of Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim, and we have made it perfectly clear in Parliament that these Frontiers must remain. There is perhaps some advantage in our not ourselves raising this issue. On the other hand I do not quite like Chou En-lai's silence about it when discussing even minor matters. Your reference to a connecting road via Assam¹⁵ must be due to some misunderstanding. The only feasible road from India to Tibet is in Sikkim via Gangtok to Gyantse. We have no proposals to make any roads in Assam towards Tibetan Frontier. It is true that in our Five Year Plan we intend developing communications in Assam towards Frontier for our internal purposes but these will take a long time. The only road therefore which can be considered in this connection is via Gangtok. We have already built part of this and made it jeepable. We propose to extend this gradually towards Frontier. The region is mountainous and difficult. I understand that on the other side of the

¹⁴ Reporting on his talk with Chou En-lai on 14 June, Panikkar stated that "the question of boundary was not touched and no allusion made to any political problems." The Chinese Premier said "he presumed that India had no intention of claiming special rights arising from the unequal treaties of the past and was prepared to negotiate a new and permanent relationship safeguarding legitimate interests." Panikkar added related to "an agreement in principle" about the "transformation" of the Indian Mission in Lhasa "into a proper Consulate-General" as an "immediate practical step" and negotiation for India's "special rights like military posts, trade marts and posts and telegraphs" at suitable times subsequently.

¹⁵ Chou En-lai had expressed Chinese preparedness to build a road from Lhasa up to their frontiers if India built one up to hers. Panikkar had replied that the project involved serious engineering problems and the question would have to be discussed with the Assam Government.

border also for many miles there is difficult mountain terrain. We have no objection to these roads being made; in fact we are making them gradually, but they will take time.

As for our Mission in Lhasa being converted into a Consulate-General we have no objection, we would also be agreeable to opening of Chinese Consulate in Bombay. We would like you to consider however how far it is desirable to have these piecemeal arrangements. We would naturally prefer a general and comprehensive settlement which includes Frontier. In our instructions to you dated 25th January, you were asked to specify our interests including those on the Frontier. We presume you have done so. If so, we can presume that Chou En-lai's silence means some kind of acquiescence. It is not for us to suggest any reconsideration. At the same time I should like to be assured on this point. I leave it you to exercise your discretion in this matter.¹⁶

Cable to K.M.Panikkar¹⁷

Your telegram 212 dated June 17th.¹⁸

¹⁶ In a clarification of Chou En-lai's conversation with Panikkar on 14 June, handed to T.N. Kaul, Indian Charge d'Affaires, on 10 July 1952, the Chinese Foreign Office stated that Chou En-lai had said that the "Chinese Government would like to state a principle at the same time solving specific problems and then follow this up with successive solution of other specific problem." The Chinese Government added that Chou En-lai felt "existing situation of Sino-Indian relationship in Tibetan China was scar left by Britain in course of their past aggression against China. For this Government of India was not responsible." and that the "relations between new China and new Government of India in Tibet should be built a new through negotiations."

¹⁷ New Delhi, 18 June 1952. MEA.

¹⁸ Panikkar stated that India's vital interest in the integrity of Nepal had been made quite clear to Chou En-lai in early February and it had been "specifically mentioned

In view of what you say, it will be desirable not to raise the question of our Frontier at this stage.

I have already informed you that we agree to exchange of Consulates General as suggested.

Negotiations on Tibet¹⁹

Question : What about negotiations with China on Tibet?

Jawaharlal Nehru : Nothing very definite has taken place yet. In Tibet we have our Mission in Lhasa; we have a trade mission at Gyantse and we keep some guards to safeguard the route and the communications system to some extent. None of these things really are of any great difficulty. They are not difficult questions at all. Obviously once it is accepted and admitted that the Chinese Government is not only the suzerain power in Tibet but is exercising the suzerainty, then something will flow from it. Then you cannot treat Tibet as an independent country with an independent representation from us. Though our Representative remains, this changes his character

that we had integrated our policy with Nepal." Chou En-lai had at that time not raised any question about it. Besides, Nehru had made frequent statements in and outside Parliament on the subject. Therefore, Panikkar had not mentioned Nepal in his note on India's interests in Tibet given to Peking; no reference to Sikkim and Bhutan was made either in view of the directions to him "that these areas are to be treated as part of India." He thought Chou En-lai's silence on the subject of the Frontier and his not having even indirectly alluded to Sikkim or Bhutan during his conversation would mean acquiescence in, if not acceptance of, India's position. He added that India must stick to the position that the Frontier had been defined and there was nothing to be discussed.

¹⁹ Remarks at a press conference, New Delhi, 21 June 1952. PIB. Extracts. For other parts of the press conference, see pp. 36-38, 76-80, 144-145, 169-170, 352-353, 405-410, 466-467, 515, 542-544 and 580-582.

somewhat, and the trade mission and other things also follow I do not think also follow. I do not think there is any difficulty about it. It has to be negotiated with China and Tibet both.

Q: Has a change already taken place in the status of our Mission there?

JN: The fact of the matter is that the status of the Representative in Lhasa has never been defined for last thirty years.

Q: Have the Chinese Government informed you to withdraw your forces?

JN: They have not informed us, but there is no doubt that we will withdraw, if necessary. It was laid down in our treaty with Tibet when it was signed that they will be there as long as the Tibetan Government did not adequate provision for the safety of the trade route. It was a temporary provision even then, and when other arrangements are made, naturally there will be no necessity for us to keep a small force there.

Q: Has the trade between India and Tibet been affected by the recent changes?

JN: Not much. It was affected in between a little, of course, but it has not been affected on any big scale. But it has been affected in another way-not with India. Well, a large quantity of Tibetan wool used to go through India to the United States, but now it is not going. In fact, in Kalimpong large quantities of Tibetan wool are piled up which normally

would have gone to the United States. So in that sense the trade has been affected, not with India so much as with foreign countries.

Q: Is it a fact that you allowed rice to be sent to Tibet?

JN: Not in big quantities. We did allow a small quantity of rice, relatively small quantity, as an exceptional case. You know, it is a very difficult route; it is not easy to go Tibet from Calcutta-mule tracks, difficult mountain terrain and the rest of it. It is not an easy matter, but because of their great need, we have allowed some quantity of rice to go through. And, as you know, China sent us one lakh tone of rice.²⁰ That is not a very great figure, but it merely was a generous gesture of the Chinese Government especially as this year has been a difficult year for them from the point of view of food. It was not easy for them to spare even this for us, nevertheless they did it.

Q: Is the arrangement on an ad hoc basis?

JN: Yes, completely.

Q: Did you receive any request from the Chinese Government to allow some transit facilities for the transport of some industrial equipment such as radio and other things to Tibet along with rice?

JN: I cannot quite remember. There have been some small items here and there possibly, but nothing big.

Q: But nothing of military nature?

JN: No, absolutely nothing of that kind. They were only some small implements and other things.

Q: And you have acceded to their request?

JN: I think we said that if they were available we will let them have them. I do not think anything has gone actually but they were very limited in quantity...

Page 490

US Assistance for Nepal²¹

28 May 1952

I think that the intrusion of American engineers and technical personnel in Nepal is likely to prove highly embarrassing to the Nepalese Government.

As it is, there is the belief among the Chinese in Tibet, encouraged by Dr. K.I. Singh²² and his followers, that American personnel are swarming over Nepal. That is untrue at present. But if a number of American engineers and others go to Nepal, then I have no doubt that the Chinese will become firmly convinced that America is gradually

²⁰ A contract for the purchase of 100,000 metric tons of rice on cash basis was signed in Peking on 26 May 1952. The rice was to be shipped in the course of the next three months.

²¹ Note to Foreign Secretary, 28 May 1952. JN Collection.

²² Singh was led the uprising against the Government of Nepal in 1950 and 1951, was reported to have been intercepted at Gyantse in Tibet by Chinese and Tibetan authorities in April 1952. He subsequently took asylum in China.

gaining a hold over Nepal. This will have rather far-reaching consequences and all kinds of new difficulties will arise.

I think that these various considerations should be pointed out to the Nepalese Government in a friendly way. In the main it should be said that the first step must necessarily be some kind of a plan. We do not wish to come in the way of any real help that they need and that they can get from abroad. But that help can only be usefully asked for when there is a plan and it should be coordinated with such help as India might be in position to give. Always the political implications should be borne in mind, as these are important and likely to have far-reaching consequences.

Page 552

Cable to V.K. Krishna Menon²³

13 July 1952

I am sending you separately the text of a long telegram received today from Kaul, Peking. He was invited to the Chinese Foreign Office and given two notes, one relating to Tibet and the other about Korea. The latter note is very surprising and completely out of tune with recent assurance given to us. The whole tone and approach is different and hardly leaves any room for argument. You will remember that the original approach to us came from Chou En-lai two months ago when you were here. After some correspondence Chou En-lai made certain proposals. These were orally made, but taken down by Pannikar and repeated to Chou En-lai. It appears that Chou En-lai has probably been overruled by higher authorities there. For the present I do not see what we can do.

²³ New Delhi, 11 July 1952. V.K. Krishna Menon Papers. NMML.

Page 664

To Syama Prasad Mookerjee

New Delhi

July 10, 1952

My dear Syama Prasad,

Your letter of July 9th about the Sanchi Vihara. I should very much like to be present on this occasion. Indeed, I would like to go to Sanchi anyhow, as I have never gone there. It is difficult for me to fix any date so far ahead and I do not know what might happen at the time which might prevent my attendance. But, subject to this, I should gladly agree to the date you have suggested, that is 30th November. About foreign visitors, I think that they should be limited to what might be called Buddhist countries. I do not think that others should be invited. The heads of Missions of Buddhist countries in Delhi should, of course, be invited.

A difficult might arise about Tibet. Any invitation sent will necessarily have to be through the Chinese Government. In that event it might be desirable to invite Chinese representatives also, leaving it to them whether they care to come or not.

As regards other details, we could discuss them when you have drawn up some tentative programme.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru