

## SELECTED WORKS OF JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

*Volume 45 Series II*

### China and Tibet

*Page 697*

#### **259. Arrest of Indian Reconnaissance Party<sup>1</sup>**

I agree with your note above.<sup>2</sup> You should certainly inform our Ambassador in Peking<sup>3</sup> that Shri Kannampilly<sup>4</sup> committed a lapse in not sending a telegram to us communicating this important piece of information.

We should certainly address the Chinese Government on this subject. As you told me today, they have protested to us about the intrusion of our

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<sup>1</sup> Note to Subimal Dutt, the Foreign Secretary, 4 November 1958. JN Collection.

<sup>2</sup> B.K. Acharya, Joint Secretary, MEA, noted on 3 Nov. 1958, that there had been no contact with the Indian reconnaissance party after late Aug. 1958 and searches had proved fruitless. Subimal Dutt then asked the Chinese Ambassador about it on 18 Oct.; the Chinese Foreign Office informed K.M. Kannampilly, Counsellor at the Indian Embassy in Peking, on 23 Oct., that the party had been arrested about a month before and been sent back across the Karakoram Pass with food supplies, cotton padded clothing and footwear. Subimal Dutt proposed on 3 Nov. that GOI should protest strongly. He was also unhappy that Kannampilly had not realised the importance of the case and had merely informed Delhi by letter instead of telegram. Dutt received information just then from the Defence Ministry that the reconnaissance party had been located at Shyok, south of the Karakoram Pass.

<sup>3</sup> G. Parthasarathi.

<sup>4</sup> Karunakara Menon Kannampilly (b.1912); Educational Service in Singapore, 1934-42; Secretary General, Indian Independence League, Rangoon, 1945; Managing Editor, Rangoon Review, 1945-46; Secretary, History Committee, INA Central Enquiry and Relief Committee, 1946; joined Indian Foreign Service, 1947; Attaché, Consulate General of India, Batavia, 1947-49; First Secretary, Indian Embassy, Djakarta, 1949-50; First Secretary, Rangoon, 1950-53; First Secretary, Kabul, 1954; Deputy Secretary General, International Commission for Supervision and Control, Laos, 1954-55; Deputy Secretary, MEA, 1956-58; Counsellor, Indian Embassy, Peking, 1958-61; Chargé d'Affaires, Bucharest, 1961-62; Ambassador to Copenhagen, 1962-65; Joint Secretary, MEA, 1965.

military personnel into their territory. We must keep this matter apart and deal with it separately. But in making our own protest to the Chinese Government about the way they have dealt with this matter and not told us anything about the arrest for nearly five weeks and then only rather casually, we might indicate that the fact of this particular area being in Indian or Chinese territory is a matter in dispute between the two countries. This question will be dealt with separately. But the fact that our surveying party went there in the ordinary course of their work cannot be said to be an intrusion in admittedly Chinese territory.

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### **260. The Khampas<sup>5</sup>**

This question appears to be a simple one and the answer can also be equally simple. The answer would be "No". To the knowledge of the Prime Minister, no such delegation wanted to wait on him during his recent visit to Bhutan.<sup>6</sup> Indeed no mention of it was made.

Simple as the question is, it may create an embarrassing situation for the Government of India. Supplementary questions might be asked and even the categorical negative answer might be supposed by the Chinese Government to hide some fact. In view of the difficult situation in Tibet, any kind of reference to it in Parliament may thus lead to embarrassment. Mr. Speaker may therefore, if he so chooses, inform the Member who has put the question that there is no truth in the allegation that a delegation from the Khampas<sup>7</sup> wanted to wait in deputation on the Prime Minister.

We would submit that the questions be disallowed.

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<sup>5</sup> Note to Subimal Dutt, 4 Nov. 1958. JN Collection.

<sup>6</sup> Nehru visited Bhutan from 21 to 27 Sept. 1958.

<sup>7</sup> Tribes of Eastern Tibet

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### **261. Increase in Production in China<sup>8</sup>**

Please send the following telegram in reply to the inquiry from Belgrade: "Your telegram 105 November 4th.<sup>9</sup>

Prime Minister in his speech at Bhopal referred to the reports of great progress in production being made in China but that the price for this was in terms of individual liberty. The whole country had been disciplined as in a military camp and people were made to work in farm, factory or elsewhere as disciplined soldiers. For his part, he valued human freedom and individual liberty greatly, but the way the Chinese had awakened the latent powers of the people was praiseworthy.

Prime Minister's speech was extempore and in Hindi.<sup>10</sup>

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### **262. Indian Frontier in Ladakh<sup>11</sup>**

In regard to the controversy we are having with the Chinese Government about our frontier in Ladakh, there is one point which we should bear in mind. I am told that the frontier as claimed by us is not only marked so in our maps but is part of the MacMahon Line. If we touch the MacMahon Line in one place, then there is no particular reason why it should not be varied elsewhere.

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<sup>8</sup> Note to Subimal Dutt, 5 November 1958. JN Collection

<sup>9</sup> The Tanjug (News Agency of Yugoslavia) correspondent in New Delhi telegraphed that Nehru in his Bhopal speech referred to China as a military camp. The Indian Embassy in Belgrade asked for a correct version of Nehru's speech

<sup>10</sup> Nehru's speech in Bhopal, 1 Nov. 1958

<sup>11</sup> Note to Subimal Dutt, 11 November 1958. JN Collection.

2. Also, as you will remember, Premier Chou En-lai told me when he was here last in December 1956 and January 1957, that they were prepared to accept the MacMahon Line though he did not like it to be called by that name.<sup>12</sup> He said that because of our friendly relations he did not wish to raise that question. He made this quite clear as will be patent from the note I wrote on that occasion.<sup>13</sup> Of course, we have nothing in writing from him. Still we might perhaps refer to this MacMahon Line which settled our frontier at that time and which has been accepted ever since then. We might further say that we were given to understand by Premier Chou En-lai during his visit to India that the Chinese Government accepted this frontier.

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### **263. Dalai Lama's Absence<sup>14</sup>**

With reference to the attached telegram,<sup>15</sup> it is difficult for us to advise the Dalai Lama in this matter. Probably what our Consul General at Lhasa has suggested is the only attitude he can take up, that is, for the Dalai Lama to

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<sup>12</sup> See SWJN/SS/36/p. 614

<sup>13</sup> For Nehru's note to N.R. Pillai, dated 1 Jan. 1957, see SWJN/SS/36/pp. 610-616

<sup>14</sup> Note to Subimal Dutt, 26 November 1958. JN Collection

<sup>15</sup> S.L. Chibber, the Indian Consul General at Lhasa, telegraphed on 25 Nov. 1958 to Apa B. Pant, the Political Officer in Gangtok, that one Dronyer Chempo Phala told him of Chinese plans to invite the Dalai Lama to Peking in Jan. 1959, that the Dalai Lama himself and the people of Tibet feared that should he leave, he may not be permitted to return; and that a popular revolt could follow. The Panchen Lama was however preparing to go to China. Chibber agreed that the Dalai Lama should not go, and that the best excuse would be that his calming presence was required in the disturbed conditions of Tibet. Dronyer Chempo Phala sought GOI advice. The Political Officer in Gangtok also agreed and added that the Dalai Lama had spoken to him the year before about such a situation arising and was keen to have GOI advice. The archives do not tell us anything more about Dronyer Chempo Phala.

point out that his absence from Tibet may have an undesirable effect on the situation there. He has been a restraining influence and this restraint will then go and he would not be able to help if he is away.

If, however, the Chinese insist on his going, I do not quite know what he can do then.

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**264. To B.C. Roy<sup>16</sup>**

November 27, 1958

My dear Bidhan,

Your letter of 25th November about your meeting Apa Pant and the position on the Tibet border.<sup>17</sup> I think that the impression that you got from Apa Pant as you state, is somewhat exaggerated. Not many people have come either to NEFA or to Bhutan from Tibet. It is a very difficult route. Nor do I expect any considerable number to come.

Your suggestion that I should draw the attention of the Chinese Government is not at all feasible. If we did any such thing, it will not make the slightest difference to anybody, except that it will entangle us in grave difficulties.

Yours affectionately,

[Jawaharlal]

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<sup>16</sup> JN Collection.

<sup>17</sup> Apa B. Pant, Political Officer in Sikkim and Bhutan, informed B.C. Roy that a large number of Tibetans were fleeing into Bhutan and NEFA and planning guerilla warfare against the Chinese from there. While they may be expelled from India as instructed by Delhi, others were merely migrating to Darjeeling district hoping to earn a livelihood. Since disturbances in Tibet provoked unrest among hill tribes in Darjeeling, he wanted the Chinese Government to exercise restraint

## **265. Mimangs and Khampas in Bhutan<sup>18</sup>**

I agree. If once the Mimangs and Khampas are allowed to come into Bhutan and rest there even in small numbers, it is exceedingly likely that more will follow. Thus the problem will become more and more difficult to handle. Ultimately it will be completely beyond the control of the Bhutan Government if this process continues. This will naturally give rise to Chinese protests and possibly some action. Bhutan will be quite unable to face the situation. If we are asked then to help Bhutan, we shall equally be helpless. We should not do anything in a military sense. All we could do would be to protest to China and this will be a feeble policy because we will not be able to follow up that protest. The result will be that without doing good to anyone, we shall injure our relations with China. Once this happens then the Chinese Government will not hesitate to take such action as they like against Bhutan.

This same argument applies to Sikkim.

Therefore, it seems important and necessary to nip this trouble more or less in the bud, even though this leads to some embarrassing situations for Bhutan or Sikkim. As a matter of fact, the Mimang and Khampa leaders should, if they are intelligent, understand this position. They will not be benefited in any way by coming to Bhutan in the long run. I can understand two or three of them, who have family contacts with Bhutan, coming there for a while and then returning, although even that is a risky business. But to come in numbers and sit down there and use Bhutan as a base for carrying on their agitation or rebellion in Tibet will obviously be very harmful to Bhutan and later to India.

The question of manning the Sikkim check-posts by Indian Police may be considered, that is, the Sikkim Darbar may be consulted. But I would anyhow hesitate very much to agree to sending our Police or other armed

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<sup>18</sup> Note to Subimal Dutt, 10 December 1958. JN Collection

forces to the Bhutan-China border. We cannot, of course, even suggest this to the Bhutan Government. Even in the event of their suggesting this, which is unlikely, I would be reluctant. What can our Police do there, completely cut off from India and in places which are difficult of access. A small number of them will be quite helpless. A large number would be a major development with international consequences. Obviously this would bring us into trouble with China and create new situations which will be very troublesome for us. We can hardly keep an army in Bhutan and relatively small forces at the check-posts will do little good. If the Bhutan Government wants to strengthen its check-posts, it must do it with its own people. Should they desire, we might consider some financial help to them which again should not be definitely given for this purpose. But, as I have said above, I feel reluctant to get entangled in this matter.

It should be made perfectly clear to the Bhutan Government (as well as to Sikkim, of course) that we cannot view with approval any development on their border there which leads to all these difficulties. The easiest course is to take a firm line right at the beginning. They may explain this as politely as they can to the Khampa and Mimang leaders. But politeness should go along with firmness.

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## **266. To Chou En-lai<sup>19</sup>**

December 14, 1958

My dear Prime Minister,<sup>20</sup>

I am writing to you after a long time. We have watched with great interest and admiration the progress made by the People's Government of China in

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<sup>19</sup> Subimal Dutt Papers, NMML. Also available in JN Collection and PIB.

<sup>20</sup> Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China. 127..

recent years. In particular, we have been deeply interested in the remarkable advance in the yield of rice per hectare as well as in the total yield, as also in the great increase in production of pig iron and steel.

2. As we are faced with somewhat similar problems in our country in regard to rice production and steel manufacture, we would naturally like to benefit by the example of what China has done. For this purpose we decided to send two delegations to China, one consisting of farmers and agricultural specialists and the other of experts in iron and steel. Your Government was good enough to agree to this. It was pointed out however that the next season for rice sowing and cultivation would be in March-April next. We hope to send our farmers and agricultural experts then, if it suits the convenience of your Government. But we shall be sending our iron and steel experts to China fairly soon<sup>21</sup>. I hope that they will learn much from the methods being now employed in China and we could then profit by their experience.

3. My purpose in troubling you with this letter, however, relates to another matter. This is in regard to the border between India and China. You will remember that when the Sino- Indian Agreement in regard to the Tibet region of China was concluded, various outstanding problems, including some relating to our border trade, were considered.<sup>22</sup> A number of mountain passes were mentioned which should be used for purposes of travel between the two countries. No border questions were raised at that time and we were under the impression that there were no border disputes between our respective countries. In fact we thought that the Sino-Indian Agreement, which was happily concluded in 1954, had settled all outstanding problems between our two countries.

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<sup>21</sup> See item 190, fn 278

<sup>22</sup> On 29 Apr. 1954. See SWJN/SS/25/pp. 468-469

4. Somewhat later, my attention was drawn to some maps published in China. The maps I saw were not very accurate maps, but nevertheless the frontier as roughly drawn in these maps did not correspond with the actual frontier. In fact it ran right across the territory of Indian in several places. I was surprised to see this, as I had not been aware at any time previously that there was any frontier dispute between our two countries. No mention of this had been made in the course of the Sino- Indian talks which resulted in the Agreement of 1954.

5. Subsequently, in October 1954, I had the privilege of visiting your great country and the happiness to meet you and other leaders of the Chinese People's Republic.<sup>23</sup> We had long talks and it was a pleasure to me to find that we had a great deal in common in our approach and that there was no dispute or problem affecting our relations. In the course of our talks I briefly mentioned to you that I had seen some maps recently published in China which gave a wrong borderline between the two countries. I presumed that this was by some error and told you at the time that so far as India was concerned we were not much worried about the matter because our boundaries were quite clear and were not a matter of argument. You were good enough to reply to me that these maps were really reproductions of old pre-liberation maps and that you had had no time to revise them.<sup>24</sup> In view of the many and heavy preoccupations of your Government, I could understand that this revision had not taken place till then. I expressed the hope that the borderline would be corrected before long.

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<sup>23</sup> From 18 to 30 Oct. 1954. See SWJN/SS/27/pp. 3-90.

<sup>24</sup> See SWJN/SS/27/pp. 81-82.

6. Towards the end of 1956, you did us the honour of paying a visit to India and we had the pleasure of having you in our midst for many days.<sup>25</sup> Part of this time you spent in visiting various parts of India.<sup>26</sup> I had occasion to be with you both in Delhi and during some of your visits, notably to our great river valley project at Bhakra-Nangal.<sup>27</sup> We had long talks and discussed many international issues which were then agitating people's minds and I was happy to know what your views were about them. In the course of these talks you referred to the Sino-Burmese border. You told me about the talks you had with U Nu at Peking and your desire to settle this problem with the Burmese Government.<sup>28</sup> I had received the same information from U Nu who had told me of your wish to settle this problem to the satisfaction of both countries. It was in this connection that you mentioned to me the Sino-Indian border, and more especially the so-called MacMahon Line. This MacMahon Line covered a part of the Sino-Burmese border and a large part of the Chinese border with India. I remember your telling me that you did not approve of this border being called the MacMahon Line and I replied that I did not like that name either. But for facility of reference we referred to it as such.

7. You told me then that you had accepted this MacMahon Line border with Burma and, whatever might have happened long ago, in view of the friendly relations which existed between China and India, you proposed to recognise this border with India also. You added that you would like to consult the authorities of the Tibetan region of China and you proposed to do so.

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<sup>25</sup> From 28 Nov. to 9 Dec. 1956 and again from 30 Dec. 1956 to 1 Jan. 1957. See SWJN/SS/36/pp. 580-638.

<sup>26</sup> Chou En-lai visited Poona, Madras, Asansol and Calcutta. See SWJN/SS/36/p. 581.

<sup>27</sup> For the record of talks there, see SWJN/SS/36/pp. 583-603.

<sup>28</sup> See SWJN/SS/36/p. 600

8. Immediately after our talk, I had written a minute so that we might have a record of this talk for our personal and confidential use. I am giving below a quotation from this minute:

"Premier Chou referred to the MacMahon Line and again said that he had never heard of this before though of course the then Chinese Government had dealt with this matter and not accepted that line. He had gone into this matter in connection with the border dispute with Burma. Although he thought that this line, established by British imperialists, was not fair, nevertheless, because it was an accomplished fact and because of the friendly relations which existed between China and the countries concerned, namely, India and Burma, the Chinese Government were of the opinion that they should give recognition to this MacMahon Line. They had, however, not consulted the Tibetan authorities about it yet. They proposed to do so".<sup>29</sup>

9. I remember discussing this matter with you at some considerable length. You were good enough to make this point quite clear. I then mentioned that there were no disputes between us about our frontier, but there were certain very minor border problems which were pending settlement. We decided that these petty issues should be settled amicably by representatives of the two Governments meeting together on the basis of established practice and custom as well as water sheds. There was long delay in this meeting taking place, but ultimately a representative of the Chinese Government came to Delhi and discussed one of these petty issues for some time. Unfortunately no settlement about this matter was arrived at then and it was decided to continue the talks later. I was sorry that these talks had not resulted in a satisfactory agreement so far. The issue is a minor one and I wanted to remove by friendly settlement all matters that affected our two Governments and countries. I had thought then of writing

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<sup>29</sup> See SWJN/SS/36/p. 614

to you on this subject, but I decided not to trouble you over such a petty matter.

10. A few months ago, our attention was drawn again to a map of China published in the magazine "China Pictorial", which indicated the border with India. This map was also not very clearly defined. But even the rough borderline appeared to us to be wrongly placed. This border line went right across Indian territory. A large part of our North-East Frontier Agency as well as some other parts which are and have long been well recognised as parts of India and been administered by India in the same way as other parts of our country, were shown to be part of Chinese territory. A considerable region of our neighbour country, Bhutan, in the north-east was also shown as being on the Chinese side. A part of the North-East Frontier Agency which was clearly on the Indian side of what has been known as the MacMahon line, was shown in this map as part of Chinese territory.

11. The magazine containing this map was widely distributed and questions were asked in our Parliament about this.<sup>30</sup> I gave answers to the effect that these maps were merely reproductions of old ones and did not represent the actual facts of the situation.

12. We drew your Government's attention to this map some time ago this year. In a memorandum in reply to us, it has been stated by your Government that in maps currently published in China, the boundary line between China and neighbouring countries including India, is drawn on the basis of maps published before the liberation.

I was puzzled by this reply because I thought that there was no major boundary dispute between China and India. There never has been such a dispute so far as we are concerned and in my talks with you in 1954 and subsequently, I had stated this. I could understand four years ago that the

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<sup>30</sup> See SWJN/SS/44/p. 567.

Chinese Government, being busy with major matters of national reconstruction could not find time to revise old maps.

I am venturing to write to you on the subject as I feel that any possibility of grave misunderstanding between our countries should be removed as soon as possible. I am anxious, as I am sure you are, that the firm basis of our friendship should not only be maintained but should be strengthened.

May I send you my warm regards and every good wish for the New Year?

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru

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### **267. To Amrit Kaur<sup>31</sup>**

December 14, 1958

My dear Amrit,<sup>32</sup>

Welcome home! I hope you are not too tired after your wanderings.<sup>33</sup>

The note you have sent me is a copy of a note which I saw some time ago and which has been circulated to many people by some émigrés from Tibet.

I do not think it is a very reliable note as these émigrés live on rumour and exaggerate even that. Of course there has been trouble in Tibet and to some extent it continues. In fact, in some parts of Eastern Tibet, a kind of guerilla war has been going on and considerable numbers of Chinese have been killed on the one side and no doubt large numbers of Tibetans have been killed on the other by bombs or otherwise. It is a difficult position in Tibet. The Dalai Lama has appealed to the rebels to stop their activities.

There is nothing that we can do in this matter.

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<sup>31</sup> JN Collection.

<sup>32</sup> Congress Rajya Sabha MP from Punjab, 1957-64, and Union Health Minister, 1947-57.

<sup>33</sup> Amrit Kaur returned to India on 11 Dec. 1958 after a six-week tour of the USA

Yours sincerely,  
Jawaharlal Nehru