

Notes Exchanged between Delhi and Peking in 1950¹

Memorandum of the Government of the Republic of India on the question of Tibet, delivered by the Indian Ambassador on 21 October 1950, to the Chinese Foreign Ministry in Peking.

The Central People's Government are fully aware of the views of Government of India on the adjustment of Sino-Tibetan relations. It is, therefore, not necessary to repeat that their interest is solely in a peaceful settlement of the issue. My government are also aware that the Central People's Government have been following a policy of negotiations with the Tibetan authorities. It has, however, been reported that some military action has taken place or is about to take place, which may affect the peaceful outcome of these negotiations.

The Government of India would desire to point out that a military action at the present time against Tibet will give those countries in the world which are unfriendly to China a handle for anti-Chinese propaganda at a crucial and delicate juncture in inter-national affairs. The Central People's Government must be aware that opinion in the United Nations has been steadily veering round to the admission of China into that organisation before the close of the present session. The Government of India felt that military action on the eve of a decision by the (General) Assembly will have serious consequences and will give powerful support to those who are opposed to the admission of the People's Government to the United Nations and the Security Council.

At the present time when the international Situation is so delicate, any move that is likely to be interpreted as a disturbance of the peace may prejudice the position of China in the eyes of the world. The Government of India's firm conviction is that one of the principal conditions for the restoration of a peaceful atmosphere is the recognition of the position of the People's Republic of China, and its association with the work of the UN. They feel an incautious move at the present time even in a matter which is within its own sphere will be used by those who are unfriendly to China to prejudice China's case in the UN and generally before neutral opinion. The Government of India attach the highest importance to the earliest settlement of the problem of Chinese representation in international organizations and have been doing everything in their power to bring it to a successful conclusion. They are convinced that the position of China will be weakened if through military action in Tibet those who are opposed to China's admission are now given a chance to misrepresent China's peaceful aims.

The Government of India feel that the time factor is extremely important. In Tibet there is not likely to be any serious military opposition and any delay in settling the matter will not therefore affect Chinese interests, or a suitable

final solution. The Government of India's interest in this matter is, as we have explained before, only to see that the admission of the People's Government to the UN is not again postponed due to the causes which could be avoided and further that, if possible, a peaceful solution is sought while military action may cause unrest and disturbance on her own borders.

Note of the Government of the Republic of India on the question of Tibet delivered by the Indian Ambassador in Peking on 28 October, 1950.

Embassy of India in China, Peking. 28 October, 1950.

Excellency, I have the honour to convey to your Excellency the following communication from the Government of India.

Begins: We have seen with great regret reports in newspapers of official statements made in Peking to the effect that "People's Army units have been ordered to advance into Tibet."

We have received no intimation of it from your ambassador here or from our ambassador in Peking.

We have been repeatedly assured of the desire of Chinese Government to settle the Tibetan problem by peaceful means and negotiations. In an interview which India's ambassador had recently with the vice-foreign minister, the latter, while reiterating the resolve of the Chinese Government to "liberate" Tibet, had expressed a continued desire to do so by peaceful means.

We informed the Chinese government through our ambassador of the decision of the Tibetan delegation to proceed to Peking immediately to start negotiations. This delegation actually left Delhi yesterday (25th). In view of these facts, the decision to order an advance of China's troops into Tibet appears to us most surprising and regrettable.

We realise there has been delay in the Tibetan delegation pro-to Peking This delay *was* caused in the first instance by the inability to obtain visas for Hong Kong for which the delegation was in no way responsible.

Subsequently, the delegation came back to Delhi because of the wishes of the Chinese Government that preliminary negotiations should first be conducted in Delhi with the Chinese ambassador.

Owing to lack of knowledge on the part of the Tibetan delegation of dealing with other countries and the necessity of obtaining instructions from their government, who in turn had to consult their assemblies, certain delay took place

The Government of India do not believe any foreign influence hostile to China has been responsible for the delay in the delegation's departure.

Two. Now that the invasion of Tibet has been ordered by the Chinese Government, peaceful negotiations can hardly be synchronised with it and there will naturally be fear on the part of the Tibetans that negotiations will be under duress. In the present context of world events, the invasion by Chinese troops of Tibet cannot but be regarded as deplorable and, in the considered judgement of the Government of India, not in the interest of China or of peace.

The Government of India can only express their deep regret that in spite of the friendly and disinterested advice repeatedly tendered by them, the Chinese Government should have decided to seek a solution of the problem of their relations with Tibet by force instead by the slower and more enduring method of peaceful approach. Ends.

I avail myself of this opportunity to renew to your Excellency the assurance of my highest consideration.

K.M. Panikkar.

Reply of the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China on 30 October, 1950, to the memorandum and note of the Indian Government on the question of Tibet.

On October 21, 1950, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China received from H. E. Ambassador Panikkar an *aide memoire* of the Government of India on the question of Tibet. On October 28, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Chou En-lai further received a communication from the Government of India as conveyed by H. E. Ambassador Panikkar.

The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China would like to make it clear Tibet is an integral part of Chinese territory and the problem of Tibet is entirely a domestic problem of China. The Chinese People's Liberation Army must enter Tibet, liberate the Tibetan people, and defend the frontiers of China. This is the resolved policy of the Central People's Government.

The Central People's Government has repeatedly expressed the hope that the problem of Tibet may be solved by peaceful negotiations, and it welcomes, therefore the declaration of the local authorities of Tibet to come to Peking at an early date to proceed with peaceful negotiations.

Yet, the Tibetan delegation, under outside instigation, has intentionally delayed the date of its departure for Peking. The Central People's Government, however, has not abandoned its desire to proceed with peaceful negotiations.

But regardless of whether the local authorities of Tibet wish to proceed with peaceful negotiations, and whatever results may be achieved by negotiations, the problem of Tibet is a domestic problem of the People's Republic of China and no foreign interference shall be tolerated.

In particular, the problem of Tibet and the problem of the participation of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations are two entirely unrelated problems.

If those countries hostile to China attempt to utilise as an excuse the fact that the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China is exercising its sovereign rights in its territory of Tibet and threaten to obstruct the participation of the People's Republic of China in the UN Organisation, it is then but another demonstration of the unfriendly and hostile attitude of such countries towards China.

Therefore, with regard to the viewpoint of the Government of India on what it regards as deplorable, the Central People's government of the People's Republic of China cannot but consider it as having been affected by foreign influences hostile to China in Tibet and hence express their deep regret.

October 30, 1950.

**Note of the Government of the Republic of India
on the question of Tibet dated 1 November, 1950.**

Embassy of India in China, Peking. November 1, 1950.

Excellency, I have the honour to convey to your Excellency the following communication from the Government of India.

Begin: The Indian Ambassador in Peking has transmitted to the Government of India the note handed to him by the vice-foreign minister of the People's Republic of China on October 30. The Government of India have read with amazement the statement in the last paragraph of the Chinese Government's reply that the Government of India's representation to them was affected by foreign influences hostile to China and, categorically repudiate it.

At no time has any foreign influence been brought to bear upon India in regard to Tibet. In this, as in other matters, the Government of India's policy has been entirely independent and directed solely towards a peaceful settlement of international disputes and avoidance of anything calculated to increase the present deplorable tensions in the world.

Two. The Government of China are really mistaken in thinking that the Tibetan delegation's departure to Peking was delayed by outside instigation. In their previous communications the Government of India have explained at some length the reasons why the Tibetan delegation could not proceed to Peking earlier. They are convinced that there has been no possibility of foreign instigation.

Three. It is with no desire to interfere or to gain any advantage that the Government of India have sought earnestly that a settlement of the Tibetan problem should be effected by peaceful negotiations, adjusting legitimate Tibetan claims to autonomy within the framework of Chinese suzerainty. Tibetan autonomy is a fact, which judging from reports that they have received from the Indian ambassador in China and also from other sources, the Chinese Government were themselves willing to recognise and foster.

The Government of India's repeated suggestions that Chinese suzerainty over Tibet and Tibetan autonomy should be reconciled by peaceful negotiations were not, as the Chinese Government seem to suggest, unwarranted interference in China's internal affairs, but well-meant advice by a friendly government which has a natural interest in the solution of the problems concerning its neighbours by peaceful methods.

Four. Wedded as they are to ways of peace the Government of India have

been gratified to learn that the Chinese Government were also desirous to effect a settlement in Tibet through peaceful negotiations. Because of this, the Government of India advised the Tibetan government to send their delegation to Peking, and were glad that this advice was accepted. In the interchange of the communications which had taken place between the Government of India and the Government of China, the former received repeated assurances that a peaceful settlement was aimed at.

In the circumstances, the surprise of the Government of India was all the greater when they learnt that military operations had been undertaken by the Chinese Government against a peaceful people. There has been no allegation that there has been any pro-vocation or any resort to non-peaceful methods on the part of the Tibetans. Hence, there is no justification whatever for such military operations against them. Such a step involving an attempt to impose a decision by force could not possibly be reconciled with a peaceful settlement. In view of these developments, the Government of India are no longer in a position to advise the Tibetan delegation to proceed to Peking, unless the Chinese Government think it fit to order their troops to halt their advance into Tibet and thus give a chance for peaceful negotiations.

Five. Every step that the Government of India have taken in recent months has been to check the drift to war all over the world. In doing so, they have often been misunderstood and criticised, but they have adhered to their policy regardless of the displeasure of great nations. They cannot help thinking early operations by the Chinese Government against Tibet have greatly added to the tensions of the world in general, which they are sure the Government of China also wish to avoid.

Six. The Government of India have repeatedly made it clear that they have no political or territorial ambitions in Tibet and they do not seek any novel or privileged position for themselves or for their nationals in Tibet. At the same time they have pointed out that certain rights have grown out of usage and agreements which are natural between neighbours with close cultural and commercial relations.

These relations have found expression in the presence of an agent of the Government of India in Lhasa, the existence of trade agencies at Gyantse and Yatung and the maintenance of post and telegraph offices at the trade route up to Gyantse. For the protection of this trade route a small military escort has been stationed at Gyantse for over 40 years. The Government of India are anxious that these establishments which are to the mutual interest of India and Tibet, and do not detract in any way from Chinese suzerainty over Tibet, should continue. The personnel at the Lhasa mission and the agencies at Gyantse and Yatung have accordingly been instructed to stay at their posts.

Seven. It has been the basic policy of the Government of India to work for friendly relations between India and China, both countries recognizing each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and mutual interests.

Recent developments in Tibet have affected friendly relations and the interest of peace all over the world; this the Government of India deeply regret.

In conclusion, the Government of India can only express their earnest hope that the Chinese Government will still prefer the methods of peaceful negotiations and settlement to a solution under duress and by force. *Ends.*

I avail myself of this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurance of my highest consideration.

K.M. Panikkar

*H.E. Minister for Foreign Affairs,
Central People's Government of P.R.C.
Peking.*

Reply dated 16 November, 1950 of the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China to the note of the Government of the Republic of India on the question of Tibet.

On November 1, 1950, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China received from H. E. Ambassador Panikkar a communication from the Government of the Republic of India on the problem of Tibet. The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China in its past communications with the Government of the Republic of India on the question of Tibet has repeatedly made it clear that Tibet is an integral part of Chinese territory. The problem of Tibet is entirely a domestic problem of China. The Chinese People's Liberation Army must enter Tibet, liberate the Tibetan people and defend the frontiers of China. This is the firm policy of the Chinese Government. According to the provisions of the common programme adopted by the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the regional autonomy granted by the Chinese Government to the national minorities inside the country is an autonomy within the confines of Chinese sovereignty.

This point has been recognised by the Indian government in its *aide memoire* to the Chinese Government dated August 26, 1950. However, when the Chinese Government actually exercised its sovereign rights and began to liberate the Tibetan people and drive out foreign forces and influences to ensure that the Tibetan people will be free from aggression and will realise regional autonomy and religious freedom, the Indian Government attempted to influence and obstruct the exercise of its sovereign rights in Tibet by the Chinese Government. This cannot but make the Chinese Government greatly surprised.

The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China sincerely hopes that the Chinese People's Liberation Army may enter Tibet peacefully to perform the sacred task of liberating the Tibetan people and defending the frontiers of China. It has therefore long since welcomed the delegation of the local authorities of Tibet, which has remained in India, to come to Peking at an early date to proceed with peace negotiations. Yet the said delegation, obviously as a result of continued outside obstruction, has delayed its departure for Peking. Further taking advantage of the delay of the negotiations, the local authorities of Tibet have deployed strong armed forces at Chengtu in Sikang province in the interior of China, in an attempt to prevent the Chinese People's Liberation Army from liberating Tibet. On August 31, 1950, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed the Indian Government through Ambassador Panikkar that the Chinese People's Liberation Army was going to take action soon in West Sikang according to set plans and expressed the hope that the Indian Government would assist the delegation of the local authorities of Tibet so that it might arrive in

Peking in mid September. The Chinese Charge d'Affaires, Shen Chien, and later Ambassador Yuan Chung-hsien, both in person, told the said delegation that, it was imperative that it should hasten to Peking within September, or that the said delegation should bear the responsibilities and be held responsible for all the consequences resulting from the delay. In mid-October, Chinese Ambassador Yuan again informed the Indian Government of this. Yet still owing to outside instigation the delegation of the local authorities of Tibet fabricated various pretexts and remained in India. Although the Chinese Government has not given up its desire of settling the problem of Tibet peacefully it can no longer continue to put off the set plan of the Chinese People's Liberation Army to proceed to Tibet. And the liberation of Chengtu further proved that through the instrument of Tibetan troops, foreign forces and influences were obstructing the peaceful settlement of the problem of Tibet. But regardless of whether the local authorities of Tibet wish to proceed with peace negotiations and regardless of whatever results may be achieved by negotiations, no foreign intervention will be permitted. The entry into Tibet of the Chinese People's Liberation Army and the liberation of the Tibetan people are also decided.

In showing its friendship with the Government of the Republic of India, and in an understanding of the desire of the Indian Government to see the problem of Tibet settled peacefully, the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China had kept the Indian Government informed of its efforts in this direction. What the Chinese Government cannot but deeply regret is that the Indian Government in disregard of the facts has regarded a domestic problem of the Chinese Government—the exercise of its sovereign rights in Tibet as an international dispute calculated to increase the present tensions in the world.

The Government of the Republic of India has repeatedly expressed its desire of developing Sino-Indian friendship on the part of these imperialist aggressors. For the sake of maintenance of benefit and of preventing the world from going to war. The entry into Tibet of the Chinese People's Liberation Army is exactly aimed at the protection of the integrity of the territory and the sovereignty of China. And it is on this question that all those countries who desire to respect the territory and sovereignty of China should first of all indicate their real attitude towards China.

In the meantime, we consider that what is now threatening the independence of nations and world peace is precisely the forces of these imperialist aggressors. For the sake of maintenance of national independence and defence of world peace, it is necessary to resist the forces of these imperialist aggressors. The entry into Tibet of the Chinese People's Liberation Army is thus an important measure to maintain Chinese independence, to prevent the imperialist aggressors from dragging the world towards war, and to defend world peace.

The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China welcomes

tile renewed declaration of the Indian Government that it has no political or territorial ambitions in China's Tibet and that it does not seek any new privileged position. As long as our two sides adhere strictly to the principles of mutual respect for territory, sovereignty, equality and mutual benefit, we are convinced that the friendship between China and India should be developed in a normal way, and that the problems relating to Sino-Indian diplomatic, commercial and cultural relations with respect to Tibet may be solved properly and to our mutual benefit through normal diplomatic channels.

Peking, November 16, 1950.

Notes

Panikkar: Kavalam Madhava (Sardar): 1931-47, served in various Indian princely states in important administrative posts; 1948-52, Ambassador to China and later, 1953-59, to Egypt and France; author of several books including *Asia and Western Dominance*, 1953 and *In Two Chinas*, 1955; died December 1963.

¹Margaret Carlyle (Editor) *Documents on international Affairs 1949-50* (Oxford, 1953), pp. 550-556. Also see *Hsinhua* (Peking), Supplement No.59, 21 November, 1950.