

***References on Tibet during talks
between Jawaharlal Nehru and Chou En-lai (January 1957)***

Talks with Chou En-lai (1st Round)¹

Chou En-lai: We will talk about the Sino-American relations tomorrow. I would first like to speak about the Tibet question. India is clear about the situation in Tibet. Tibet is a vast territory with only one million population. They are of the same nationality, viz. Tibetan. Throughout history, Tibet has formed a part of China; but, unlike Sinkiang which is also a national minority area, it was never made into a province of China. The religion of the people is Lamaistic. In dealing with Tibet, we take a very careful attitude. In the past, religion and politics were combined into one, that there was the same religious and political leader. But in actuality, political power was vested in the government (Kashag) under the Lama, since a new Lama was always an infant (less than one year old) and could not look into political matters till he came of age. Therefore, for more than ten years, political power rested in the hands of the government. Besides, the temples also wielded powers. There are three large ones in Lhasa and there are living Buddhas there who have power. Therefore, those who have power are the living Buddhas and the persons in government. Tibet is divided into three parts: Inner Tibet: Outer Tibet; and Chamdo area. In the past, Chamdo was sometime made a part of Sikang. Sometime, it was not a part of Sikang. Now, all these three parts are made into one autonomous

¹ Record of talks with Chou En-lai at Sulej Sadan, Bhakra-Nangal, between 3 and 6 p.m. and partly on the train from Nangal to Delhi, between 10.30 and 11.30 p.m. and from 00.30 to 2.30 a.m., 31 December 1956 and 1 January 1957. Chou En-lai's Visit to India (December /956- January 1957), File No.EI2 (109), NGO/56 and EI21132/NGO/59.

region. In this area, there has been formed a preparatory committee² with Dalai Lama as Head and Panchen Lama as Deputy Head.

Next year, the autonomous area will be formed. These three parts still have some distance (differences) among them, because the reactionary government in the past have created discord among them. We have always advised unity. Our policy has always been to give them an autonomous government under the Central Government, enjoying a large measure of autonomous rights. The Central Government consults it on all related matters and local matters are handled by themselves. We fully respect their religion; everyone lives in religion there and every family has to give one or two of its members to the temple. At present, we do not talk of democratic reforms to them; but when other parts of China become economically better and if Tibetans feel the need and agree to it, then we can introduce them. At present, there is a semi feudal and semi-slave system in Tibet with compulsory service to government and temples. China can help them in improving their living conditions, but then there is the difficulty of communications. Therefore, it will have to be done slowly.

The two Lamas (Dalai and Panchen) are young and able. They have their own views on subjects. Since their tour of various places in China, they want to improve conditions in Tibet. We, however, advised them not to go too fast but to take all the government and Lamas with them first. There are bound to be people who are dissatisfied and people who are afraid that their religion would be affected. It is natural because they do not understand the policy of the Central Government. We take an attitude of waiting and seeing. But there is also a minority under foreign influence which does not like Tibet to be under the Central Government and wants to have an independent Tibet. Their activities are mainly carried out from Kalimpong and these include some

² This was the Preparatory Committee for the establishment of the Autonomous Region of Tibet (PCART). It was inaugurated on 22 April 1956 in Lhasa.

Tibetans who have returned from the USA. In the past, some trouble was started in Tibet once or twice, but Dalai Lama pacified it. Towards them, we take a mild attitude. We disbanded their organisation, but made no arrests. We let Dalai Lama persuade and educate them. This was the situation in the past. There is, however, a group in Lhasa which has kept constant contact with Kalimpong and has never stopped its activities. When Dalai Lama went to Peking for People's Conference³ (and when Your Excellency met him there⁴) these people started rumours that Dalai Lama was not going to return and this caused disturbances. Only when Dalai Lama went back the rumours stopped. This time, when India invited Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama⁵ the Chinese Government knew that some trouble would start in Tibet after they left Lhasa. But, on the other hand, the Chinese Government considered the friendly relations existing with India and they also knew that Dalai Lama would be well received in India and the visit would help religious contacts. Dalai Lama decided to come and also to bring more people with him. Then we also advised Panchen Lama to accept the invitation; because if only Dalai Lama came, it would show disunity between the two Lamas. We also knew that when they came to India they would meet many Tibetans who had never returned to Tibet after liberation. There are thousands of Tibetans near Kalimpong. And although Dalai Lama did not go to Kalimpong, these Tibetans did not give up hope and the US agents have encouraged such and other subversive activities. Dalai Lama's brother,⁶ who has recently returned from the US told Dalai Lama

³ The 'first session of the First National People's Congress met in Beijing from 15 to 28 September 1954. The Dalai Lama was one of the participants. He returned to Lhasa on 29 June 1955, after a year's stay in China.

⁴ . Nehru visited China from 19 October to 30 October 1954. See Selected Works (Second Series), Vol. 27, p. 78 where Nehru mentions his meeting with the Dalai Lama.

⁵ To participate in the 2,500th Buddha Jayanti celebrations, held in India from 26 to 30 November 1956.

⁶ Thubten Jigme Norbu.

that the United States would support independence movement in Tibet or failing that would welcome him in the United States.

Now the Kalimpong Tibetans want Dalai Lama to go to Kalimpong in order to preach to them. And it is difficult for him to decide. If he does not go, then it would not be good from the religious point of view. But if he goes, there is bound to be some trouble. At the same time, some of the officers accompanying the Dalai Lama this time have also been influenced in their Indian visit. The influence comes from two sources; (1) Kalimpong Tibetans, including Dalai Lama's brother. Among these officers, there are some backward elements who fear reform and are easily susceptible to propaganda. (2) Local officers in India: some of these local officers are quite unfriendly to China. In welcome speeches to the two Lamas, they called Tibet a separate country and made no mention of China at all. For example, the Mayor of Bombay⁷ and the Mayor of Madras or some nearby town referred to Tibet as a separate country without mentioning China. In the case of the latter Mayor, he was going to say it but the Chinese Embassy officials came to know about it and protested and therefore that part of the speech was dropped. Calling Tibet a different country gives an impression that Tibet could be independent. Dalai Lama is really faced with a problem. The Chinese Government had advised Dalai not to go to Kalimpong; but if he does not go to Kalimpong, it would show that Dalai has some prejudice against the Tibetans in Kalimpong. But if he goes to Kalimpong, all sorts of embarrassing questions would arise. If Panchen goes, it would be much more awkward, because Panchen comes from Outer Tibet (Hou Tsang) and there is historically some animosity between the Inner Tibetans and Outer Tibetans. But if Panchen does not go, then also again it would give ground to spread rumours that something is wrong between them or that the Chinese Government is not allowing him to go there. Actually, in one of the big temples in India, something unpleasant between the

⁷ Salebhoy Abdul Kader.

two Lamas also occurred. Therefore, the matter is very complicated and the chief cause is the instigation of USA. Taiwan has also a hand in it because another of his brother⁸ (married to a Chinese) has come from Japan. At the same time, since Dalai left Lhasa, those bent on trouble are preparing for an incident in Lhasa. These people have some armed forces. Some three temples in Lhasa have also armed forces and they want to create an incident with the People's Liberation Army there. If it happened, then there would be bloodshed. This plot was, however, discovered and then an open meeting was called where the representatives of the Central Government declared that they should not try to create an incident; but if they did so, People's Liberation Army would definitely take measures to put it down. People's Liberation Army on its part, would not take any provocative steps. The local government and the People's Liberation Army representatives have formed a committee to handle this matter. So, for the time being, the matter is over; but, as long as Dalai Lama is away, something might happen. The Kalimpong people are thinking of keeping Dalai as long as possible so that his absence could be taken advantage of. This is chiefly instigated by the USA and Taiwan. Since Dalai Lama is in India, if anything happens it will be unfortunate. We will, of course, take measures to put down any incident in Tibet, but still it is not good if something happens.

Newspaper reports say that Dalai Lama might stay in India. He can if he wants to as long as he abides by Indian Government's regulations. Whether he wants to go to Kalimpong, he is going to decide tomorrow. He has to consult his Government. This is the whole situation. If anything should happen in Tibet or in Kalimpong, of course the Chinese Government would be directly concerned. Since Dalai Lama is in India, I thought I should also inform Your Excellency about this. The situation is a complicated one.

⁸ Gyalo Thondup, elder brother of the Dalai Lama.

Jawaharlal Nehru: Your Excellency has said a good deal. You said that I know a lot about Tibet but I don't know. Something of what you told me is news to me. I know nothing about Dalai Lama's going to Kalimpong. I am hearing it for the first time. It is a matter primarily for Your Excellency and Dalai Lama to decide. It would be embarrassing for us to say anything either way.

About Kalimpong, I am surprised to learn that there are tens of thousands of Tibetans there. I know that there was a large number but not to this extent. There are many kinds of Tibetans and the people are akin to Tibetans. I have heard also for a long time that Kalimpong has a nest of spies and the spies are probably more than the population. In the past, we have turned out some of the people from Kalimpong, including Americans. I have not met any of Dalai Lama's brothers. I have met one eight or nine years ago. And the second time I have met him was when Your Excellency introduced me to him recently. I do not know that his brothers were in Delhi. The Government of India's policy has been not to allow anti-Chinese propaganda to be carried out here.

I am thankful to Your Excellency for the background material given to me. But I do not quite understand what you meant when you said that Tibet in the past had not become a province of China.

Chou En-lai: That Tibet is part of China is a fact, but it as never an administrative province of China but kept an autonomous character. Therefore, when we started negotiations for peaceful liberation of Tibet, we from the first recognised the autonomous character of the region. When I said that India knew more about Tibet, I meant about the past history. For example, I knew nothing about McMahon Line until recently when we came to study the border problem after liberation of China.

Jawaharlal Nehru: Historical knowledge is not important but is useful as background information. History is gone. My impression was that whatever it

may be in theory, for all practical purposes Tibet has all along been autonomous. But at the same time, whatever government there might have been in China, Tibet has always been claimed by the Chinese Government. The British tried to create some trouble on account of their fear of Czarist Russia but this is past history. We recognise that China has, in law and in fact, suzerainty over Tibet even though it may not have been exercised sometime. As your Excellency has said, Tibet has behaved in an autonomous way and was cut off from other countries.

The criterion of an independent state is that the state should have independent foreign relations and Tibet had no foreign relations except with England.

The McMahon Line was put forward in the 1913 Conference between the Chinese, the Tibetans and the British.⁹ That Conference decided not only the McMahon Line but also two other points. The Chinese Government raised objection only to the other two points. Surely, the Chinese Government always knew about it (i.e. the McMahon Line).

As regards Dalai Lama, we do not want any incident to take place about Dalai Lama in Kalimpong or while he is in India. We will do as Your Excellency and Dalai Lama decide. What kind of incident does Your Excellency fear might happen? If you can give some specific idea about the trouble, we can prevent it.

Chou En-lai: The situation is really very complicated and it is difficult for me to say as to what specifically might happen. Dalai Lama is also concerned about this matter and he also said that the situation is complicated. There are two possibilities: (1) We have already raised this matter seriously with the Dalai Lama. Now Dalai Lama will naturally go back and talk to his officials and maybe perhaps nothing would happen except some small quarrels or verbal

⁹ This was the Simla Conference held between October 1913 and April 1914.

exchanges and he returns to Lhasa safely. Alternatively, (2) a possibility is that attempts might be made at Kalimpong to detain Dalai Lama. In fact, that is exactly the slogan raised there: "Won't let Dalai Lama go back".

Panchen Lama does not want to go to Kalimpong. If he goes, he might be treated discourteously or some other trouble might be created. These are some of the possibilities.

If such incidents happen, Indian Government has power to intervene and check them, because such incidents partake of the nature of anti-Chinese activities or activities designed to create an independent Tibet or espionage Or encouragement to subversive activities. We are mentioning these possibilities to your Government in advance so that, if anything happens, the Government of India could take preventive measures.

As regards the Tibetan question, even during the Ching dynasty, Tibet was indeed part of China and, at the end of the 19th century, when China was defeated in war with France and other countries, all Western powers wanted to divide China; but they could not agree among themselves and so agreed to have separate spheres of influence. This was especially true after the Boxer Uprising. That is why Tibet was always kept as a part of China, not only in law but in fact, with a view to keep balance between powers.

The relations of Sikkim and Bhutan with China differ from those between Tibet and China, because Sikkim and Bhutan were never under China and even the Imperial power did not recognise Bhutan and Sikkim as being under them. But in the case of Tibet, it was a different case. The Ching Emperor appointed Governors to Tibet and troops were also stationed in Lhasa. The British wanted to go into Tibet under the pretext that Russia wanted to get into Sikang. Russia also made the same pretext, namely, that Britain was trying to get into Tibet, to get into Sikang. Exactly because of this rivalry and balance of power, Sikang and Tibet were never taken actually. But there are many still who are

not acquainted with these facts. Even the Pakistan Prime Minister recently¹⁰ told me that he always thought Tibet to be independent. Even the Simla Conference admitted Chinese suzerainty over Tibet.

McMahon Line-What I meant was that people like me never knew about it till recently. The then Chinese Government, namely, the warlords in Peking and the KMT naturally knew about it. Perhaps U Nu might have told Your Excellency that we studied this question and although this Line was never recognised by us, still apparently there was a secret pact between Britain and Tibet and it was announced at the time of the Simla Conference. And now that it is an accomplished fact, we should accept it. But we have not consulted Tibet so far. In the last agreement which we signed about Tibet¹¹, the Tibetans wanted us to reject this Line; but we told them that the question should be temporarily put aside. I believe immediately after India's independence, the Tibetan Government had also written to the Government of India about this matter. But now we think that we should try to persuade and convince Tibetans to accept it. This question also is connected with Sino-Burmese border and the question will be decided after Dalai Lama's return to Lhasa. So, although the question is still undecided and it is unfair to us, still we feel that there is no better way than to recognise this Line.

Jawaharlal Nehru: The border is a high mountain border and sparsely populated. Apart from the major question, there are also small questions about two miles here and two miles there. But if we agree on some principle, namely, the principle of previous normal practice or the principle of watershed, we can also settle these other small points. Of course, this has nothing to do with the McMahon Line.

¹⁰ H.S. Suhrawardy was in Beijing on a state visit from 18 to 29 October 1956

¹¹ .Refers to the Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between India and the Tibet Region of China. It was signed in Beijing on 29 April 1954.

Chou En-lai: Yes, the question can be solved and we think it should be settled early.

Jawaharlal Nehru: I would like to mention one thing in connection with what you said about some Mayors trying to make out Tibet as an independent country. Reference by a Mayor has no significance. He does not know much politically and probably very little about China and Tibet. They would generally only know about the great religious significance of Tibet to Indians and that is all that they must be stressing.

Our policy has been to deal with the Chinese Government about Tibet and the treaty on Tibet was also signed with the Chinese Government. We are naturally interested in what happens in Tibet as one of our near neighbours but we don't want to interfere. Our main interest is from the point of view of the pilgrims not only Buddhist pilgrims but Hindu pilgrims too for whom Kailash and Manasarovar are sacred places and abodes of God. A Dalai Lama is always a mythical figure and a great deal of mystery is attached to him in the mind of an Indian. So, when Dalai Lama came, the people were naturally greatly attracted to him. But the only significance is that the people would be interested from a religious point of view. Your Excellency has said that Tibet is backward and cut off. But it cannot remain long that way. They are a deeply religious people and they are naturally afraid that their religion and customs would be upset. I myself personally think that changes are inevitable in Tibet, but I would like Tibetans to feel that they themselves have brought about the changes. As Your Excellency has said, Tibet is a part of China but with full autonomous powers. Then I don't understand why there should be any trouble in Tibet at all.

Chou En-lai: Basically, I am in agreement with your views but there are certain specific matters which may be clarified. We have always held the view that purely religious contacts should not be limited or restricted by State boundary. Thus in Asia, there are many Buddhist countries and they should have more contacts with each other. We have established relations in religious matters even with Thailand. Chairman Mao also said that there should be increasing contacts between Chinese Buddhists and Buddhists from other countries and that we should remove restrictions. This would also increase the confidence of Buddhists in Tibet that we respect their religion. So we also approved of Dalai and Panchen Lamas visit to India. But purely religious contacts is a difficult matter. Some try to exploit it for political ends, as in the West some call themselves Buddhists and try to instigate movement for the independence of Tibet.

Your Excellency said that Tibetans should feel that the reforms are brought about by themselves. It is correct, but this does not mean that there would be no trouble because there are some who are open to foreign influence and there are some who lack understanding. They feel that since China is a socialist country, religion may be restricted; but actually it is not so. We respect religion. On the other hand, the Ching dynasty used religion to decrease the populations of Tibet and Mongolia, while we want to increase population in Tibet without putting any restrictions. Furthermore, among the Tibetans there are many who are not so progressive. Those who are progressive want quick reforms, but this makes the non-progressive ones suspicious of the progressive elements and they feel that the latter are being influenced' by the Hans. For example, in Szechuan province the progressive Tibetans wanted early reforms and there was resistance. The backward elements started agitation and one armed lamasery surrounded the People's Liberation Army troops and this People's Liberation Army detachment had to be fed by means of air-dropped food and thus finally they were able to beat

back the attack. Some of these Tibetans later ran away to Lhasa. So, even if we agree that Tibetans themselves should carry out reforms, such problems and difficulties do arise. If it is a question of internal dissatisfaction alone, we would like to adopt a policy of waiting. But if there is foreign influence in it, then it becomes troublesome. Therefore, we maintain that religious contacts should be developed in Asian countries, but at the same time we should stop subversive activities. Espionage activities are carried out in the open in Kalimpong and we feel that the Government of India should intervene because these activities will interfere with religious contacts and exchange.

Jawaharlal Nehru: If any fact about espionage comes to our notice, of course we will take steps. But if it is only a vague suspicion and no proof, then it is difficult to take action

Chou En-lai: It is quite true. What we sought by informing the Government of India before hand was to help the Government of India to deal with the situation in case something happens.

As regards Dalai Lama's going to Kalimpong, I should be able to let you know something by tomorrow morning after I have seen Dalai Lama.

Talks with Chou En-lai (2nd Round)¹²

Chou En-lai: This morning I had talks with both Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama and I have also told them about our yesterday's conversation. They told me that yesterday they held a meeting. Dalai Lama still finds it difficult to decide. The people with him also know the complicated situation; but there are over 10,000 people waiting for him at Kalimpong and if he does not go, it may not also look nice. Therefore, his party also find it difficult to make up their mind. Dalai Lama wanted me to have a talk with his officials this afternoon and then perhaps something could be decided. Panchen Lama will not be going to Kalimpong. Firstly, it may be embarrassing for him and it may not also be safe because the Tibetans there are mostly from Lhasa and they are hostile. So it is more important for Dalai Lama himself to decide. It won't be good for us to tell him. So, I can tell Your Excellency the final decision later. The Dalai Lama's retinue always make him waver. If, however, they agree to go directly to Lhasa, then a trial flight to Lhasa will first have to be carried out. IN: Yes, if they agree to go straight; still they will have to go separately for ceremonial purposes. They can go to Lhasa from Calcutta. Perhaps the Tibetans from Kalimpong could come and see him at Bagdogra on the way. Chou En-lai: I also wanted to tell Your Excellency something about my visit to Burma and Pakistan. ..

(At this stage the talks were concluded and then the two Prime Ministers talked about Premier Chou's third visit to India. Premier Chou said that he would be coming to India on the 24th and will leave for Nepal on the 25th. Premier Chou said that it was a pity that he would be missing the Indian Republic Day only by a day. PM said that the Chinese Prime Minister was

¹² Record of talks with Chou En-lai at New Delhi, 2.30 p.m. to 5.00 p.m., 1 January 1957. Chou En-lai's Visit to India (December 1956- January 1957). File Nos. F 12 (109), NGO/56 and EI2/132/NGO/59, MEA

welcome to India any time. Premier Chou said that now that he was not going to Nepal, the two Lamas had also dropped the idea of going to Nepal. Before going to Nepal, Premier Chou said, he would like to discuss the question of relations between China, India and Nepal with Premier Nehru and would like to ask if Premier Nehru would like to make any suggestions to the Chinese Prime Minister regarding his visit to Nepal. Premier Chou added that he would like to talk about this matter when he comes to India next time. Premier Chou said that he was shortly meeting the two Lamas and that he wanted to have a talk with the two brothers of Dalai Lama. Premier Chou added that he wanted to tell Dalai Lama's elder brother that he could have his different views, but it was unnecessary for him to carry on his activities).

Talks with Chou En-lai (3rd Round) ¹³

On our journey to Nangal and back, in Nangal and today in New Delhi, I had long conversations with Premier Chou En-lai. During his previous visit to Delhi, I also had long talks with him.¹⁴ The present talks were in continuation of those talks.

2. Apart from a number of minor matters, I discussed especially with him:

- (i) The crisis in Egypt and the Middle East
- (ii) The Hungarian situation
- (iii) Tibet
- (iv) Sino-American relations

3. Our talks were through interpreters, the Chinese interpreter¹⁵ and Shri Paranjpe.¹⁶ No one else was present except today when Marshal Ho Lung¹⁷ was a silent witness of them. Paranjpe has taken fairly copious notes and it would be desirable to get a copy of these notes for record in our Ministry. I do not want these records to be circulated even in the Ministry and only the persons actually concerned should see them. They should, therefore, be kept under Top Secret cover.

4. I made also fairly long notes of my talks with him about Tibet and Sino-American relations. I shall attach these to this note. Below I am giving a summary of some of these talks.

Tibet

¹³ Note to N.R. Pillai, Secretary General, MEA, R.K. Nehru, India's Ambassador in Beijing and Apa Pant, political Officer in Sikkim, 1 January 1957. Jawaharlal Nehru Collection.

¹⁴ Chou En-lai was in New Delhi from 28 to 30 November 1956. He had a series of private discussions with Nehru during this visit.

¹⁵ Pu Shou-Chang.

¹⁶ V. V. Paranjpe.

¹⁷ Deputy Prime Minister of the State Council of China.

5. Premier Chou En-lai said that Tibet was a vast territory with only a small population, about one million. It has always been a part of China, but never a province of China as Sinkiang. I asked him to explain this and he made it clear that Tibet had always been, though a part of China, a separate and autonomous part, presumably having a special status which was much more than that of a province and that it had a well-defined nationality, namely, the Tibetan. Politics and religion were interconnected and the Kashag,¹⁸ a kind of Cabinet, held political power. The new Dalai Lama was always an infant and seldom lived of good age. Therefore, it was the Kashag that really was the chief authority in Tibet.

6. Other seats of power were the big temples with their living Buddhas. There were three large temples in Lhasa.

7. Tibet was divided into three parts: (1) Outer Tibet; (2) Inner Tibet and (3) Changdo area. The Changdo area had been sometimes part of Sikang Province and sometimes part of Tibet proper. Now all the three had been joined into one.

8. A Preparatory Committee with Dalai Lama as its head and the Panchen Lama as Vice-Chairman had been established and next year Tibet would become an autonomous region.

9. There had been often previously discord between the three parts. The policy of the Chinese Government now was to have an autonomous region with considerable rights, under the leadership of the Central Government which would consult Tibet in all matters relating to Tibet. So far as local matters in Tibet were concerned, they would be decided mainly by Tibetans themselves. Their religion would be fully respected. It was not proposed even to talk of democratic reform in Tibet at present. At some future time, when other parts

¹⁸ The Dalai Lama's Council of Ministers consisted of four officials, three aristocratic and one monastic.

of China were more developed and the Tibetans agreed, a beginning might be made with democratic reforms in Tibet. .

10. At present the living standards in Tibet were very low and there was a lack of transportation facilities.

11. Both the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama were very young and very able. They had their own views. Since their tour in China, they wanted to go ahead in Tibet with reforms. The Chinese Government had advised them, however, not to go ahead too fast. They should carry their advisers and others with them. In spite of this advice, some people in Tibet were afraid that their religion would be affected. They did not understand the policy of the Central Government which was to wait and see.

12. Some people under the influence of foreign governments did not want Tibet to be under the Central Government of China and talked about the independence of Tibet. Their activities for independence were mainly carried on from Kalimpong. Some of these people had returned from the USA. In the recent past, there had been some trouble in Tibet, but the Dalai Lama had pacified these people and the Chinese Government had adopted a mild attitude. They disbanded the organisation claiming independence, but did not arrest anyone. They left it to the Dalai Lama to persuade these people.

13. There was a group of people in Lhasa who had kept constant contact with the group in Kalimpong and had never stopped their activities. When the Dalai Lama went to Peking, this group spread the rumour that the Dalai Lama would not return to Lhasa. Only when the Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa was this story ended. This year, when India and Nepal invited the Dalai Lama, the Chinese Government knew that if the Dalai Lama went out of Tibet, there would be some trouble in Tibet. Still, because of religious reasons as well as the friendly relations with India and Nepal, the Chinese Government left it to the Dalai Lama to decide. After the Dalai Lama had decided to visit India and

Nepal, with a large number of companions, the Chinese Government advised the Panchen Lama also to accept.

14. There were tens of thousands of Tibetans round about Kalimpong and US agents were all the time inciting them. The Dalai Lama's brother recently returned from the US. He told the Dalai Lama that the US would give support to the independence movement and welcome the Dalai Lama to the US.

15. As the Lamas did not go to Kalimpong, the Tibetans there were disappointed, but they had not given up hope and were now insisting on his going there nominally to preach. If the Dalai Lama did not go to Kalimpong, this would not be good from the religious point of view. If, on the other hand, he went there, there was bound to be trouble.

16. Among the officials accompanying the Dalai Lama to India, some had been influenced in India by two sources: (1) Tibetans in India including the Dalai Lama's brother in Kalimpong, and (2) local officials in India, some of whom had been unfriendly in their speeches of welcome, calling Tibet a separate country and not mentioning China. The Mayor of Bombay was mentioned in this connection and there was another case elsewhere. (I pointed out that all these people were concerned with the religious ties between India and Tibet and were not referring to any political aspect.)

17. Premier Chou En-lai went on to say that this encouraged the Dalai Lama's officials and the Dalai Lama was faced with the difficult problem of going or not going to Kalimpong. The Chinese Government advised them not to go there. It was even more difficult for the Panchen Lama to go to Kalimpong as the Tibetans there were mostly from the Lhasa region which had been opposed, historically, to the Panchen Lamas in the past. If the Panchen Lama did not go to Kalimpong, this would give rise to misunderstanding about Chinese Government preventing him.

18. Premier Chou referred to some unpleasant incident in some temple in India which had embarrassed the Lamas.

19. One brother of the Dalai Lama who had just returned from Japan and had contacts with Taiwan was also creating trouble.

20. Since the Dalai Lama left Lhasa, those who were out for trouble were preparing for some incident of armed conflict with the Chinese forces. If this happened there would be bloodshed. This plot was discovered in time and an open meeting was held in Lhasa. Representatives of the Central Government announced that no one should try to have such an incident. If any armed attack took place, it would be put down. The Chinese forces, however, would not take any provocative steps. A joint committee of Chinese and Tibetans was formed to deal with this situation. So long as the Dalai Lama was away from Tibet, there was always the danger of some such kind of conflict taking place. But the Kalimpong Tibetans wanted to keep the Dalai Lama in India for as long as possible. Their activities were chiefly instigated by the US and Taiwan. If any untoward incident occurred in Tibet while the Dalai Lama was away, this would result in unfortunate consequences.

21. Premier Chou continued: The Government of India had stated that Tibetans might stay in India provided they did not agitate against China and obeyed the laws of India. If anything happened in Tibet or Kalimpong, the Chinese Government would be directly involved.

22. At our second meeting, we continued the talk on Tibet and I wanted further clarification about Tibet's position in China in the past and in the present. Premier Chou repeated that Tibet was always a part of China, but it was never made an administrative part of China and had always been autonomous. Hence the present Government in China recognised this fact. He referred to past history and the activities of British Imperialism in Tibet. In this connection he said that the present leaders of China had not even heard of the McMahon Line till after the Revolution.

23. I asked Premier Chou as to what his fears were about an incident in Kalimpong. So far as the Government of India was concerned, we wanted no

trouble there or anywhere else in India and we could certainly prevent any disorder.

24. Premier Chou replied that he had a talk with the Dalai Lama who had agreed that the situation in Kalimpong was complicated and something might happen there if he went there. The Dalai Lama was conferring about this matter with his officials. It was possible that nothing serious might happen now. But there was another possibility that the Tibetans in Kalimpong might demand independence for Tibet. They might also try to keep the Dalai Lama in Kalimpong and prevent him from going back. Also, the Panchen Lama did not want to go there as he might be treated with discourtesy. The Indian Government could of course deal with any disorder. Premier Chou was informing them so that they could be prepared to deal with any contingency that might arise.

25. Premier Chou then went back to past history and said that even during the Ching dynasty Tibet was part of China. At the end of the 19th century, when China suffered defeat at the hands of Western Powers, the latter wanted to divide up China, but could not agree among themselves. Hence only separate spheres of influence were established. Tibet was always considered by these Powers as part of China.

26. The relations of Sikkim and Bhutan with China were different from Tibet's relations with China. Sikkim and Bhutan were never under China and even the imperialist powers never considered them as such, as they did in regard to Tibet. The Ching dynasty appointed Governors and stationed troops in Tibet.

27: Premier Chou said that in his talks with the Prime Minister of Pakistan, the latter had said that he had always thought Tibet to be independent. Premier Chou then told him the facts.

28. Premier Chou referred to the McMahon 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 McMahon Line. They had, however, not consulted the Tibetan Government about it yet. They proposed to do so.

29. In 1954, when India and China were discussing their Treaty, the Tibetan Government wanted the Central Government of China to raise the question of the Indian frontier with them. They were told by the Chinese Government that this question should be postponed.

30. Premier Chou said that about 1948, soon after the Indian independence, the Tibetan Government wrote to the Indian Government on this subject of the frontier.

31. Premier Chou added that the Central Government tried to convince the Tibetan Government to recognise the McMahon Line as an accomplished fact in India and Burma.

32. I pointed out that, apart from the McMahon Line, there were certain very minor border problems between India and Tibet. These should be settled soon to put an end to these petty controversies and so that everybody should know that there was no dispute left about the frontier. The settlement should be based on established practice and custom as well as the watershed if there was any such thing there. In these small border problems very small pieces of uninhabited territory in the mountains were involved. They had no importance and the border should be a geographical one as far as possible. Premier Chou agreed that these should be settled soon on this basis.

33. I pointed out that Tibet had been important for India because of a religious bond which applied both to Buddhists and Hindus. It was from this point of view that references were often made to Tibet. The Dalai Lama was considered

some kind of a mythical figure and was greatly respected and attracted crowds. Tibet had been backward and cut off. It was deeply religious. There was fear there of religion and customs being interfered with. If an assurance was given that Tibet would have full internal autonomy, then there was no reason why there should be any trouble. Tibet would undoubtedly change as it could no longer remain isolated. If these changes came on Tibet's own initiative, then they would be wholesome and stable. If there was any sense of imposition, then there would be trouble.

34. Premier Chou said that he was basically in agreement with what I had said. But he wanted to clarify certain matters. The Central Government of China had always been of the view that religious contacts should not be limited by boundaries of states. For this reason they favoured the present visit of the two Lamas to India. Chairman Mao had said that Chinese Buddhists should have greater contacts with Buddhists elsewhere and the Chinese Government was now seeking ways to facilitate these contacts and remove any restrictions which came in the way. This would increase the confidence of the Tibetans also. But there were some people who wanted to exploit this for other purposes. Thus some Buddhists in Western countries had other objectives. The Chinese Government did not wish to encourage such persons to go to Tibet.

35. Premier Chou said that it was right that reforms in Tibet should be carried out by Tibetans themselves. But, even so, there might be some trouble in Tibet because of foreign influence.

36. Tibet's religion had caused decrease of population. The Ching dynasty aimed at this through religion. The present Government of China wanted to encourage religion without any obstruction. Some people in Tibet were more progressive, but others would suspect them of being influenced by the Han people.

37. Premier Chou referred to some Lamas in temples, probably in the east, having taken to arms and surrounded a detachment of the People's Liberation Army.¹⁹

For a number of days the detachment had no contacts with outside. Finally the Chinese Government had to send supplies by parachute so that resistance could be carried on.

38. Thus, although it was agreed that internal problems should be dealt with by the Tibetans themselves, in practice difficulties arose. Foreign influence came in and created trouble. But for this, the Chinese Government would leave the matters wholly to be settled internally.

39. Premier Chou said that if espionage activities took place in Kalimpong or any other place in India, he hoped that the Indian Government would take action. I replied that if we had proof we would certainly take action, but we could not act unless we had proof and on merely vague rumours.

40. In my talk today with Premier Chou En-lai, he mentioned that he had talks with the two Lamas and told them about my conversation with him. The Dalai Lama was still perplexed about going to Kalimpong. The Panchen Lama had no intention of going there as he felt he would be embarrassed there and also there was some risk to his person.

41. I mentioned that it might be desirable for the two Lamas to go back to Tibet by air. Premier Chou liked this idea and said that there should be a trial flight before the travel by air. He was going to talk again to the Dalai Lama about this question of going to Kalimpong and let me know more definitely tonight.

42. I discussed the programme of the two Lamas in India-their going to the place near Mandi and later to Nalanda and then to Chittaranjan, etc. He agreed.

¹⁹ Perhaps Chou En-lai was referring to the revolt in the Changtreng Sampheling monastery, one of the largest monasteries in Kham.

The Nepal visit has been given up. I said that I agreed that it would be better for the Nepal trip to be taken up on some later occasion. I have also indicated that in all the circumstances it would perhaps be better for the two Lamas not to go to Kalimpong during this visit. They might go there on some other occasion. If they fly to Lhasa, their planes would stop at Bagdogra and an opportunity might be given to people to gather there and worship them or take their blessings. This should not be inconvenient for people in Kalimpong which is not far from Bagdogra.

43. In regard to my conversations with Premier Chou En-lai on other subjects, I shall write a separate note. These, I repeat, must be treated as Top Secret. Copies should be given to our Ambassador in Peking, Shri Apa Pant and one copy for the Ministry which SG should see and then pass on to Foreign Secretary.

Talks with Chou En-lai (4th Round)²⁰

8. He then told me that he would be going to Afghanistan from Moscow and then to Nepal, passing India on the way.²¹ Probably, he would reach India on the 24th January and leave for Nepal on the 25th. He said he would be sorry to miss our National Day on the 26th January. I told him that he would be welcome on any day, and we would be glad if he was here on our National Day. So far as I was concerned, I would be in Delhi from January 22nd to the 30th.

9. Later in the evening, I met the Dalai Lama. He told me that he had not yet decided about the visit to Kalimpong. He felt that it would be difficult to miss it. I suggested to him to fly back to Lhasa from India. He did not like the idea much and said that he had promised to visit some monasteries in Tibet on the way to Lhasa. Therefore, it was better for him to go by road.

10. I told the Dalai Lama that his brother at Kalimpong often spoke very foolishly and it seemed to me that he was rather unbalanced. I told him that as he had already agreed by a Treaty²² to Tibet being part of China but autonomous, it was not easy for him to break this agreement. Indeed, any attempt to do so would result in a major conflict and much misery to Tibet. In an armed conflict, Tibet could not possibly defeat China. I also pointed out that we had a treaty with China in regard to Tibet. Our position all along had been that sovereignty rested with China but Tibet should be autonomous. Therefore, the best course for the Dalai Lama to adopt was to accept this sovereignty but insist on full autonomy in regard to internal affairs. He would be on strong ground on this, and he could build up the Tibetan people under his leadership.

²⁰ Note to N.R. Pillai, Secretary General, MEA, R.K.Nehru, India's Ambassador in Beijing, and Apa Pant, political officer in Sikkim, 1 January 1957. Jawaharlal Nehru Collection.

²¹ Chou En-lai was in Moscow between 17-19 January 1957. He was in Kabul between 19-23 January 1957.

²² The 17-point agreement signed on 23 May 1951.

11. I told the Dalai Lama also that I had been surprised to learn that some people had advised him to remain in India and not return to Tibet. That would be the height of folly and it would harm him as well as Tibet. This was not the way to serve the cause of Tibet. He must be in his own country and give a lead to his people. He listened carefully to what I said and did not say much himself. I am likely to meet him again a week or so later.

12. On my way to the airport to see Premier Chou off, he told me that no decision had been arrived at about the Kalimpong visit of the Dalai Lama. Premier Chou had met the Kashag or Cabinet of the Dalai Lama and spoken to them about it. He had also met the Dalai Lama's two brothers and spoken to them frankly, telling them that they could hold any views they liked but they must not create trouble in Kalimpong or elsewhere.

13. Apparently, the Dalai Lama will indicate his final decision about the Kalimpong visit to the Chinese Ambassador in Delhi later.

14. I think it is desirable, whether the Dalai Lama goes to Kalimpong or not, for someone on our behalf to make it clear privately to the brothers of the Dalai Lama that we do not approve of any agitation or trouble in any part of India in regard to Tibet. We sympathise with the people of Tibet and are prepared to help them in any legitimate way. But we cannot tolerate any mischief in Indian territory. In the event of the Dalai Lama going to Kalimpong, some special steps should be taken for the prevention of any trouble there.

Talks with Chou En-lai (5th Round)²³

First Session²⁴;

... PM said that he presumed that the Chinese Premier was aware of the latest programme of Their Holinesses Dalai and Panchen Lamas. PM mentioned that Dalai Lama was at the time at Kalimpong and after attending the Republic Day celebrations at Darjeeling on the 26th, would return there and then proceed to Tibet via Gangtok. We had taken precautions that there should be no trouble or incident in Kalimpong.

Chinese Premier mentioned that before Dalai Lama left Delhi, a Tibetan called Shagapa²⁵ presented a document to the Dalai Lama, but Shagapa had been spoken to firmly and warned that there must be no trouble at Kalimpong. The Chinese Premier recalled that this Shagapa had left Tibet long ago and was now staying at Kalimpong.

Source: Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru (Series II, Volume 36)

²³ Summary of talks with Chou En-lai held at New Delhi on 24 January J 957. Jawaharlal Nehru Collection.

²⁴ The talks began at 4.00 p.m. at Teen Murti House in New Delhi.

²⁵ Tsepon W.D. Shakabpa (b. 1907); Tibetan government official; entered government service, 1930; subsequently, headed finance department; spokesman, Tibetan National Assembly; headed, Tibetan Trade delegation, 1948; moved to India, 1951; appointed personal representative of the Dalai Lama, 1959.