

Message from Nehru to Chou En-lai¹

1 September 1953

It has been a matter of deep satisfaction to me to note the growing cooperation between our great countries in international affairs. I am convinced that this cooperation and friendship will not only be to our mutual advantage, but will also be a strong pillar for peace in Asia and the world. I hope that our two countries will maintain full contact and cooperate with each other in dealing with problems of mutual interest. That has been your Excellency's wish and I reciprocate it fully.

2. Developments in Tibet in the last three years have naturally led to a new situation. We have recognized this situation and are fully prepared to adapt ourselves to it. We have pointed out that certain rights have grown out of usage and agreement which are natural between neighbours. Your Excellency informed our Ambassador last year that there is no difference of point of view in regard to Tibet between India and China and that your Government is anxious in every way to safeguard Indian interests in Tibet. You added that there is no territorial dispute or controversy between India and China in this matter and that "we are not desirous of abruptly bringing to an end existing institutions and arrangements, as such a course would create a vacuum."

3. The Government of India have been anxious to come to a final settlement about pending matters so as to avoid any

¹ Sent on 1 September 1953 to N. Raghavan to convey it to Chou En-lai. From Agreement between India and China on Trade and Intercourse between India and the Tibet region of China, 1954, GOI, MEA.

misunderstanding and friction at any time. On the 2nd August 1952, they presented a note to Your Excellency's Government about all pending matters expressing their willingness to discuss them and to modify certain practices and even to remove some of them, if they are considered as affecting the dignity of China. Subsequently, at the request of the Chinese Government, they agreed to the establishment of Consulates-General in Lhasa and Bombay. No further steps have been taken since then to negotiate a settlement of other problem in Tibet.

4. The Government of India feel that it would be advantageous to both our countries to deal with all remaining problems together. Piecemeal consideration of each problem does not lead to satisfactory solutions. Indeed, difficulties and frictions have arisen from time to time over relatively petty matters. Recently, some incidents have taken place when the local authorities in Tibet stopped our Trade Agent in Western Tibet from proceeding on his official tour to Rudok and his staff to Taklakot, both important trade marts for Indian traders and pilgrims. There has been a forcible seizure of his wireless set which is essential for the performance of his duties. We learnt of this incident with surprise and regret, because it did not seem to us in consonance with the friendly relations between our two countries.

5. The Government of India's concern in this matter was conveyed to the Chinese Embassy here. It was pointed out that Your Excellency had agreed that, pending settlement of all outstanding matters, existing usages would continue. A request was made for the return of the Trade Agent's wireless communication facilities and for the Tibetan authorities to be instructed not to interfere with the functioning of our

Trade Agent. The Embassy was also informed about the replacement of the escort at Gyantse and Yatung and the proposed inspection visit of our Political Officer in Sikkim to our Trade Agencies at these places. A reply has been received from the Chinese Embassy, but this has apparently been made without full knowledge of the facts and of assurances given by Your Excellency.

6. I do not wish to trouble Your Excellency with further details, but I would suggest that our respective Government take the earliest opportunity to consider all pending matters so as to avoid such incidents. Meanwhile, I would request that instructions may be issued to insure that there is no interference with existing usages. I would invite Your Excellency's Government to confer with our Government at the earliest suitable opportunity, either in Delhi or in Peking, on all such matters affecting relations between our two countries. I am convinced that this will lead to a satisfactory settlement and remove every cause of possible friction.

Jawaharlal Nehru