



# **INDIA—CHINA**

## **RELATIONS 1947-2000**

### **A DOCUMENTARY STUDY**

Introduced & Edited by  
**AVTAR SINGH BHASIN**

PUBLISHED IN COOPERATION WITH  
POLICY PLANNING DIVISION  
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

**INDIA-CHINA RELATIONS**  
**1947–2000**  
**A DOCUMENTARY STUDY**  
**VOLUME-I**

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1947-2000  
A DOCUMENTARY STUDY**

**VOLUME–I of five**

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TO  
*My Late Wife*  
*Mandip kaur*  
*1941-1996*





## PRESIDENTS OF INDIA

Dr. Rajendra Prasad	January 26, 1950	-	May 13, 1962
Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan	May 13, 1962	-	May 13, 1967
Zakir Hussain	May 13, 1967	-	May 3, 1969
Varahagiri Venkata Giri	May 3, 1969	-	July 20, 1969
Muhammad Hidayatullah	July 20, 1969	-	August 24, 1969
Varahagiri Venkata Giri	August 24, 1969	-	August 24, 1974
Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed	August 24, 1974	-	February 11, 1977
Basappa Danappa Jatti	February 11, 1977	-	July 25, 1977
Neelam Sanjiva Reddy	July 25, 1977	-	July 25, 1982
Giani Zail Singh	July 25, 1982	-	July 25, 1987
Ramaswamy Venkataraman	July 25, 1987	-	July 25, 1992
Shankar Dayal Sharma	July 25, 1992	-	July 25, 1997
Kocheril Raman Narayanan	July 25, 1997	-	July 25, 2002
A. P. J. Abdul Kalam	July 25, 2002	-	July 25, 2007
Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil	July 25, 2007	-	July 25, 2012
Pranab Mukherjee	July 25, 2012	-	July 25, 2017
Ram Nath Kovind	July 25, 2017	-	-



## PRIME MINISTERS OF INDIA

		From	To
1.	Jawaharlal Nehru	15-08-1947	27-05-1964
2.	Gulzari Lal Nanda	27-05-1964	09-06-1964
3.	Lal Bahadur Shastri	09-06-1964	11-01-1966
4.	Gulzari Lal Nanda	11-01-1966	24-01-1966
5.	Mrs. Indira Gandhi	24-01-1966	24-03-1977
6.	Morarji Desai	24-03-1977	28-07-1979
7.	Charan Singh	28-07-1979	14-01-1980
8.	Mrs. Indira Gandhi	14-01-1980	30-10-1984
9.	Rajiv Gandhi	31-10-1984	01-12-1989
10.	V. P. Singh	02-12-1989	10-11-1990
11.	Chandra Shekhar	10-11-1990	21-06-1991
12.	P. V. Narashimha Rao	21-06-1991	10-05-1996
13.	Atal Bihari Vajpayee	16-05-1996	01-06-1996
14.	H.D. Deve Gowda,	01-06-1996	21-04-1997
15.	Inder Kumar Gujral	21-04-1997	28-11-1997
16.	Atal Bihari Vajpayee	19-03-1998	13-05-2004
17.	Dr. Manmohan Singh	25-05-2004	25-05-2014
18.	Narendra Damodardas Modi	26-05-2014	--



## EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTERS OF INDIA

	From	To
Jawaharlal Nehru	15-08-1947	27-05-1964
Lal Bahadur Shastri	09-06-1964	17-07-1964
Swaran Singh	18-07-1964	14-11-1966
M.C. Chagla	14-11-1966	05-09-1967
Smt. Indira Gandhi	06-09-1967	13-02-1969
Dinesh Singh	14-02-1969	27-06-1970
Swaran Singh	27-06-1970	10-10-1974
Y. B. Chavan	10-10-1974	30-10-1977
Atal Bihari Vajpayee	26-03-1977	28-07-1979
Shyam Nandan Prasad Mishra	28-07-1979	31-01-1980
P. V. Narasimha Rao	14-01-1980	19-07-1984
Smt. Indira Gandhi	19-07-1984	31-10-1984
Rajiv Gandhi	01-11-1984	24-09-1985
Bali Ram Bhagat	25-09-1985	12-05-1986
P. Shiv Shankar	12-05-1986	22-10-1986
Narayan Dutt Tiwari	22-10-1986	25-07-1987
Rajiv Gandhi	25-07-1987	25-06-1988
P. V. Narashimha Rao	25-06-1988	02-12-1989
Inder Kumar Gujral	05-12-1989	10-11-1990
Madhavsinh Solanki	21-06-1991	31-03-1992
P. V. Narasimha Rao	31-03-1992	18-01-1993
Dinesh Singh	18-01-1993	10-02-1995
Pranab Mukherjee	10-02-1995	16-05-1996

Sikander Bakht	21-05-1996	01-06-1996
Inder Kumar Gujral	01-06-1996	18-03-1998
Atal Bihari Vajpayee	19-03-1998	05-12-1998
Jaswant Singh	05-12-1998	23-06-2002
Yashwant Sinha	01-07-2002	22-05-2004
Natwar Singh	22-05-2004	06-11-2005
Manmohan Singh	06-11-2005	24-10-2006
Pranab Mukherjee	24-10-2006	22-05-2009
S. M. Krishna	25-05-2009	26-10-2012
Salman Khurshid	28-10-2012	26-05-2014
Smt. Sushma Swaraj	26-5-2014	-----

## FOREIGN SECRETARIES OF INDIA

	<b>Name</b>	<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>
1.	K. P. S. Menon	16-04-1947	21-09-1952
2.	R. K. Nehru	22-09-1952	10-10-1955
3.	Subimal Dutt	11-10-1955	17-01-1961
4.	M. J. Desai	11-04-1961	04-12-1963
5.	Y. D. Gundevia	05-12-1963	18-02-1965
6.	C. S. Jha	19-02-1965	13-08-1967
7.	Rajeshwar Dayal	19-08-1967	06-11-1968
8.	Triloki Nath Kaul	07-11-1968	03-12-1972
9.	Kewal Singh	04-12-1972	31-03-1976
10.	Jagat Mehta	01-04-1976	18-11-1979
11.	R. D. Sathe	19-11-1979	30-04-1982
12.	Maharaj Krishna Rasgotra	01-05-1982	31-01-1985
13.	Romesh Bhandari	01-02-1985	31-03-1986
14.	A.P. Venkateshwaran	01-04-1986	20-01-1987
15.	K. P. S. Menon	21-01-1987	05-12-1989
16.	S. K. Singh	16-02-1989	19-04-1990
17.	Muchukundu Dubey	20-04-1990	30-11-1991
18.	J. N. Dixit	01-12-1991	31-01-1994
19.	K. Srinivasan	01-02-1994	28-02-1995
20.	Salman Haider	01-03-1995	30-06-1997
21.	K. Raghunath	01-07-1997	01-12-1999
22.	Lalit Mansingh	01-12-1999	11-03-2001
23.	Smt. Chokila Iyer	12-03-2001	30-11-2003
24.	Kanwal Sibal	01-07-2002	30-11-2003



25.	Shashank	01-12-2003	31-07-2004
26.	Shyam Saran	31-07-2004	31-08-2006
27.	Shivshankar Menon	01-09-2006	31-07-2009
28.	Mrs. Nirupama Rao	01-08-2009	31-07-2011
29.	Ranjan Mathai	01-08-2011	01-08-2013
30.	Smt. Sujatha Singh	01-08-2013	28-01-2015
31.	S. Jaishankar	28-01-2015	---

## AMBASSADORS OF INDIA IN CHINA

S.No.	Name of Ambassadors	Period	
1.	K.M. Panikker	20-05-1950	12-09-1952
2.	N. Raghavan	13-09-1952	05-11.1955
3.	R.K. Nehru	06-11-1955	27-07-1958
4.	G. Parthasarathi	28-07-1958	19-07-1961

### Charge d'affaires a.in

5.	P.K. Banerjee	20-07-1961	04-01-1964
6.	J.S. Mehta	05-01-1964	29-05-1966
7.	R.D. Sathe	30-05-1966	03-02-1969
8.	B.C. Mishra	19-04-1969	11-08-1973
9.	L.L. Mehrotra	12-08-1973	19-06-1976

### Ambassadors

10.	K.R. Narayanan	07-07-1976	11-11-1978
11.	R.D. Sathe	12-12-1978	15-11-1979
12.	K.S. Bajpai	13-07-1980	06-07-1982
13.	A.P. Venkateswaran	27-09-1982	27-01-1985
14.	K.P.S. Menon (Jr)	26-03-1985	12-02-1987
15.	C.V. Ranganathan	28-05-1987	31-05-1991
16.	Salman Haidar	22-08-1991	27-11-1992
17.	C. Dasgupta	08-01-1993	10-06-1996
18.	V.K. Nambiar	09-09-1996	28-06-2000
19.	Shivshankar Menon	03-08-2000	07-07-2003
20.	Nalin Surie	23-08-2003	19-10-2006

21.	Nirupama Rao	27-10-2006	15-07-2009
22.	Dr. S. Jaishankar	12-08-2009	14-12-2013
23.	Ashok K. Kantha	06-01-2014	05-01-2016
24.	Vijay Gokhale	20-01-2016	November 2017

## CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTERS/ PRIME MINISTERS/PRESIDENTS

No.	Foreign Ministers	Took office	Left office	President	Premier
1.	Zhou Enlai	Oct. 1949	Feb. 1958	Mao Zedong	Zhou Enlai
2.	Chen Yi	Feb. 1958	Jan. 1972	Liu Shaoqi Vacant	Zhou Enlai
3.	Ji Pengfei	Jan. 1972	Nov. 1973	Vacant	
4.	Qiao Guanhua	Nov. 1973	Dec. 1976	Vacant Abolished	Zhou Enlai/ Hua Guofeng
5.	Huang Hua	Dec. 1976	Nov. 1982	Abolished	Hua Guofeng/ Zhao Ziyang
6.	Wu Xueqian	Nov. 1982	Apr. 1988	Li Xiannian	Zhao Ziyang
7.	Qian Qichen	Apr. 1988	Mar. 1998	Yang Shangkun and Jiang Zemin	Li Peng
8.	Tang Jiaxuan	Mar. 1998	Mar. 2003	Jiang Zemin	Zhu Rongji
9.	Li Zhaoxing	Mar. 2003	Apr. 2007	Hu Jintao	Wen Jiabao
10.	Yang Jiechi	Apr. 2007	16-03-2013	Hu Jintao	Wen Jiabao
11.	Wang Yi	16-03-2013	Incumbent	Xi Jinping	Li Keqiang



## CHINESE AMBASSADORS IN INDIA

1.	Yuan Zhongxian	September 1950	February 1956
2.	Pan Zili	April 1956	July 1962
3.	Chen Zhaoyuan	September 1976	December 1979
4.	Shen Jian	March 1980	July 1984)
5.	Li Lianqing	November 198	April 1987
6.	Tu Guowei	July 1987	August 1991
7.	Cheng Ruisheng	September 1991	November 1994
8.	Pei Yuanying	January 1995	March 1998
9.	Zhou gang	April 1998	June 2001
10.	Hua Junduo	August 2001	November 2004
11.	Sun Yuxi	December 2004	December 2007
12.	Zhang Yan	December 2007	September 2012
13.	Wei Wei	January 2013	August 2014
14.	Le Yucheng	August 2014	April 2016
15.	Luo Zhaohui	September 2016	---



## **PREFACE**

India and China are two big countries, in size and resources, and also in numbers. Relations between them have a bearing on the politics of the region and also internationally. India had welcomed the victory of Chinese Communist Party against the Kuomintang in 1949 and was one of the few countries among the non-communist countries in extending earliest recognition to it.

2. India and China were not contiguous neighbours until China occupied Tibet in 1951 and established its effective control in Lhasa. It is this occurrence in history that brought them within handshake distance and indeed they shook hands to the amazement of the world. The Chinese expansionist mindset soon took over the narrative and Tibet proved to be the Achilles' heel in promoting friendly relations between the two new neighbours across the hitherto peaceful Himalayan borderland. As this compendium brings it out, Tibet and Tibetan issues proved detrimental to India-China relations. Shorn of Tibet, there was not much to interact between them despite the exchange of visits at the level of prime ministers which provided the initial bonhomie but it did not last long and the narrative on Tibet caught up.

3. The Five-volume, 2523-document study is expected to provide the understanding of the ups and downs in their relations over the years. This work gives me the satisfaction of fulfilling my ambition of documenting India's relations with the neighbouring countries, an ambition which I started nursing as I got closer to my retirement in 1993. It led to the publication of five volumes each on India's Relations with Sri Lanka in 2000, with Bangladesh in 2003 and with Nepal in 2005. Given the range of issues involved in the case of Pakistan, it needed Ten Volumes, 10,000 pages and seven years to document India-Pakistan relations, which got published in 2012.

4. Given the delicacy of the issues involved in the India-China discourse and these being live issues, the Ministry of External Affairs remained reluctant to open up its archives for this project. The Nehru Papers in the custody of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML) were great help in filling this lacuna. There are indeed some gaps, but could not be helped. I am grateful to the Department of Culture and the Director, NMML for their permission in accessing these papers,



which earlier were practically out of bound for research. There are also some other collections of private papers in the NMML, such as those of P.N. Haksar, T.N. Kaul and Subimal Dutt which too contributed to the richness of the present work.

5. As I sat down to interpret and organise these papers to tell a coherent story, a problem presented itself. The evolution of independent India's relations with Tibet had hardly started, China asserted its sovereignty over a reluctant and weak Tibet. India was caught in their vortex and it became difficult to separate the two sets of documents--those dealing with Tibet and those with China. The advice I received from the former Indian Ambassador in China, Shivshankar Menon, who also occupied many other important posts such as Foreign Secretary and National Security Advisor, came to my rescue. He advised to put the available documents chronologically and leave it to their users to interpret them as best as they liked. While following this advice scrupulously, I did depart from this arrangement in a few places, where I thought putting certain papers together would make their reading inclusive. In this category particularly fall the documents bearing on India-China-Burma and India-China-Nepal relations. I do hope the users of these documents would understand it, even if, in some cases, it is found somewhat inconvenient.

6. In reproducing the documents I have made every effort to adhere to the original text both in terms of punctuation and spellings of names of persons and places as occurring in the original.

7. In the successful completion of a work of this magnitude I received help from several friends and well-wishers. First of all, I thank Smt. Sujatha Singh former Foreign Secretary for her approval of the project and launching it. I will also like to thank Ambassador Ashok Kantha former Secretary (East) and former Ambassador to China, in encouraging me to undertake this study, since he felt my earlier works had been found useful, and this will be another addition.

8. Foreign Secretary Shri S. Jaishankar was extremely kind in sparing his valuable time to see me when requested and removing bureaucratic hurdles that came in the way as the project progressed. He was also very appreciative of my earlier publications in this genre, which he said had been found useful. Thank You, Sir.

9. Having already crossed 82, and having kept myself fully occupied in the many research projects listed at the beginning of this publication I find difficult to say it quits. I do hope remaining years and energies would stand me in good stead to undertake some more studies. *Inshaallah*.

10. For all my accomplishments since retirement, I have to thank a few of my friends who stood by me through many difficult moments with their advice and help. Though their number is large, I would like to mention a few of them, whose help made all the difference.

11. First and foremost I would like to mention Shivshankar Menon, who since my retirement in 1993 has been source of great help. He ensured that all hurdles, as and when they occurred and they did on many occasions, were crossed and the tape finally breasted. I would also like to thank his wife Mohini, who always welcomed me at their home not only in Delhi but also abroad as their house-guest and offered their warm hospitality and ensured that I felt comfortable. Please accept my gratitude for all your friendship over the years.

12. In thirty years of my career in the Ministry of External Affairs, I worked with a number of officers. My association with Ambassador Kishan Rana during the working-years blossomed into friendship in the post-retirement years. In the present project he made sure that I did not lose sight of important documents and that my study was as comprehensive as possible. My sincere thanks to him. I also thank him and Mrs. Rana for their invitation to spend some time in their holiday home at Mount Abu. Their house located on a hillock provided a panoramic view of the town and fresh air breathed there cleansed my lungs and provided a fresh dose of energy. Thanks to both of them.

13. The bond forged with Ambassador Chetput Ranganathan during the working years in the Ministry has stood me in good stead thereafter. Though he shifted his base to Bangalore or Bengaluru after retirement, I have remained in touch with him and sought his advice quite often and he was always quite generous in this regard. Whenever I happened to go to Bangalore, I never failed to call on him which gave me an opportunity to visit the iconic Bangalore Club. Many thanks, Sir.

14. TCA Rangachari has been a personal friend for the past almost half a century. We have stayed in close touch wherever we happened to be. The family relations that developed over the years have been

gratifying. He read my pieces which I occasionally wrote and offered valuable advice. Kokila and he had been generous with their hospitality in Paris which continues to be available in Delhi even now.

15. There is a long list of other friends who too contributed to my success both in the official and private life. It will need to fill a lot more space, if I were to mention all of them. Some time anonymity has its own blessings and virtuous and I leave them in the category of unnamed friends.

16. This project has been done with the cooperation of the Policy Planning and Research Division of the Ministry of External Affairs. I offer my thanks to the officers and staff of the Division for their consideration during the life of the work.

17. At the India International Centre, I have the privilege to keep company of Jagmoham, a former Lt. Governor of Delhi, Governor of Goa and Jammu and Kashmir, and a minister in the Central Government, and above all a scholar in his own right. His dedication to work is difficult to match but I did try to draw a lot of inspiration from him. It is however difficult to emulate him.

18. The trinity of Raghav, Shammi and Shiv, while engrossed with their academic pursuit after retirement from their own professions, have been my constant friends and companions at the India International Centre. Their company over many cups of coffee and tea and during lunch and sometimes over a drink, kept my spirits high and morale up. They provided that dose of energy on a daily basis, which prevented any dull moments to creep in the daily routine at the IIC, which is otherwise an idyllic place for one's pursuits.

19. At my ripe age, there were occasions when my health failed me albeit temporarily. On all such occasions I found my daughter Puneet and son-in-law Gurpreet Singh, always by my side and helping me to stand on my feet, despite their own busy schedule of work. Their affection provided the balm that one needs the most at this stage in one's life. To say thanks would be to complete a formality.

20. In the preparation of this work, I used facilities of the specialised institutions like the National Archives of India, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Libraries of the Ministry of External Affairs and the Indian

Council of World Affairs. Many thanks to the staff and officers of these institutions for their cooperation. I would like to make a special mention of the Library of the India International Centre, where I finally sat down to work on the material gathered from other institutions. The Staff of the Library provided all the essential facilities and amenities ungrudgingly. Thank you Shifali, Rajiv, Kanchan, Hema and of course Rakesh, Jagdish and Sunil.

21. Alas Jagat Mehta is no more in this world! Whether he was in or out of office, my work received his appreciation which was most satisfying. Even after his retirement, I kept in touch with him and visited him in his ancestral home in Udaipur a few times and enjoyed his hospitality. May his soul rest in peace!

22. I should not fail to thank my printer Ravi Kumar and his talented son Ankit of Focus Impressions who slogged over the job for many years and met the standards, the work demanded of them.

23. At the end I remember my wife who was tragically killed in an accident involving a two-wheeler while crossing a road almost within a couple of years of my retirement leaving me to spend my retirement years all by myself. I sought solace in the work I accomplished and I dedicate the present work to her.

23. As I complete this project, I suddenly realise that it is now quarter of a century since I retired. However when I look back at the volume of work accomplished, I draw satisfaction that these were not entirely wasted years. It is not easy for one to evaluate one's own work. But when I see my work being quoted by scholars, it gives satisfaction that it was worth the effort.

25. As indicated above I received help and sought opinion of many persons in the preparation of this study. As already stated they were generous with their help and advice. However I must finally hold myself fully responsible for any deficiency that may be found in these volumes.

New Delhi

*Avtar Singh Bhasin*

November 30th, 2017



## INTRODUCTION

At independence in 1947, India found China in the throes of civil war between two contenders—the Nationalist and the Communist parties. The two-decade of civil war ended in 1949 with the control of the country by the Communist Party of China led by Mao Tse-tung. A Central Government of the People's Republic of China was formally proclaimed on October 1, 1949. The tottering Nationalist Government under Chiang Kai Shek fled from the mainland to establish itself on the island of Formosa, the present day Taiwan.

2. India welcomed the new regime in Peking and on December 30<sup>th</sup>, 1949 notified to Peking its intention to establish diplomatic relations. On the 4<sup>th</sup> January 1950 Chinese Prime Minister and Foreign Minister General Chou En lai informed New Delhi of China's "willingness to establish diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and Union of India on a basis of equality, mutual benefits, mutual respect for territorial sovereignty". Chou expressed the hope that the Government of India "would send its representative to Peking to conduct talks in this matter." The Chinese representative who had handed over Chou En lai's letter to the Indian mission in Nanking made a reference to "the Sino-Indian cultural relations from the long past and expressed the hope that China and India would work together for world peace."

3. The Embassy in Nanking while communicating the above message to New Delhi added that neither the USSR nor other "satellite" countries were asked to send their representatives to Peking "in connection with their recognition". New Delhi instead of sending a representative from New Delhi informed Peking that pending the appointment of an ambassador it proposed to appoint Mr. A.K. Sen, who was then in-charge of the Indian Mission in Nanking as *Charge d' affairs ad interim*, who would be available for any preliminary discussions. China having accepted Sen's appointment asked New Delhi to send him to Peking "to enter into discussions for the establishment of diplomatic relations". New Delhi in sending him to Peking made it clear that Sen would only discuss preliminary and procedural matters and any substantive issue would have to be discussed after the exchange of Ambassadors.

4. On March 30<sup>th</sup> 1950 Sen reported to New Delhi that since India had accepted the Chinese terms for establishing diplomatic relations

*i.e.* (i) the properties and assets of China in India would pass to the new Chinese government, (ii) Government of India would not recognise the “remnants of the Kuomintang reactionaries in India” and (iii) expulsion of Nationalist China from the United Nations and support for Communist China’s entry in the UN, China desired to start negotiations for the exchange of diplomatic relations. It may be relevant to point out that before extending recognition to the new regime India coordinated its moves for recognition with the United Kingdom and other Commonwealth countries.

5. On 20<sup>th</sup> May, 1950 Kavalam Madhava Panikkar who was earlier ambassador accredited to the Nationalist Government in Nanking now presented his credentials to Chairman Mao Tse-tung in Peking. While accepting the credentials Mao told Panikkar, that “India and China cannot afford to have war. We have too many important problems to think about” and added that “China had no aggressive intention towards anybody, and least of all towards India.”

6. Within days of the Ambassador taking over, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru addressed a letter to British Foreign Secretary Bevin strongly urging that “every effort should be made to ensure early entry into the Security Council of new Chinese Government.” It was the United States which stood in the way and it ruled out completely Chinese entry in the world body. A weighty consideration against Chinese entry was China enjoying veto rights, along with the Soviet Union could paralyse the Security Council. Korean war and China’s attitude also complicated the matters.

7. India, in extending the recognition, ignored the considerable volume of anti-Indian propaganda in the Chinese media in the last few months. India suspected sources of this propaganda were both in the Tass news agency and the Indian Communist Party. There were full scale attacks on Nehru. An English broadcast by Radio Peiping on September 9, 1949 called on Tibetans to rise up against the plot of the British and American imperialists and “their lackey Nehru of India”. Government of India and Nehru were described as subservient to imperialist interests and reactionaries. Justifying its criticism, a *People’s Daily* editorial also broadcast by Radio Peking on September 13, 1948 accused India of declaring on July 27 that Tibet had never recognised Chinese suzerainty.

It also quoted a Spokesman of the MEA suggesting on August 8, that Bhutan had become a protectorate of India. The editorial asked: 'since the Nehru Government has announced its suzerainty over Bhutan and declared that Tibet had never recognised Chinese suzerainty; will it now declare suzerainty over Tibet'? China was also resentful of India trying to follow the third road while Mao categorically rejected it. The Chinese were disappointed that India, Burma and Indonesia had not openly aligned themselves with the Soviet bloc and the blame for this was laid at India's doors.

8. Once India had recognised the People's Republic of China, the latter's attitude underwent some change. Nehru, in any case, was well disposed towards Chinese revolution. He saw in the emerging China a new star rising for Asia. Even before extending recognition to China Nehru could see "new China ...going to play an important part in South East Asia and to some extent in the world". In June 1949 Nehru in his fortnightly letter to the Premiers of the Provincial Governments in India pointed out that the Chinese revolution "is one of the biggest changes and upheavals in history and is going to have very far-reaching consequences."

9. India, on independence had inherited a certain policy and relationship from the British Government of India. It considered Tibet to be autonomous internally and only nominally under Chinese suzerainty. It had trading and certain extra-territorial rights inherited in Tibet from the British Government of India.

10. On April 8, 1947 Government of India in a letter to the Political Officer in Gangtok, who was the supervisory officer for Tibet and Bhutan informed him and also asked him to "make this (new) policy known to the Mission in Lhasa for their guidance". He was told that as a result of the review made of the Government of India's political relationship between China, Tibet and India, it has been decided that while recognising Tibetan autonomy, Government of India

"are not prepared to do more than encourage this in a friendly manner and are certainly not disposed to take any initiative which might bring India into conflict with China on this issue. The attitude which they propose to adopt may best be described as that of a benevolent spectator, ready all the times—should opportunity



occur—to use their good offices to further a mutually satisfactory settlement between China and Tibet.”

Regarding the Indian boundary with Tibet, the same letter emphasised that the “Government of India stand by McMahon Line and will not tolerate incursions into India... They would however, at all times be prepared to discuss in a friendly way with China and Tibet any rectification of the frontier that might be urged on reasonable ground by any of the parties to the abortive Simla Conference of 1914.” Since in April 1947 Nehru was Member-in-Charge of the External Affairs Department in the Viceroy’s Executive Council, it could be presumed that a letter laying down the policy of such import would have issued with his approval.

11. In pursuance of the above policy, on July 23 on the eve of its departure from India, the British Indian Government in a message to Lhasa, assured Tibet of its “friendly interest in the future prosperity of the Tibetan people” and suggested that “after August 15 the close and cordial relations which have existed for so many years with themselves and the Government of India will continue with the successor Indian Government upon whom alone the rights and obligations arising from the existing treaty provisions will thereafter devolve.”

12. On October 16, 1947 the Tibetan Government while thanking the Indian Prime Minister for his assurance that India desired to maintain cordial relations with Tibet added:

“We have discussed time after time with the Government of India when India was under British rule, to return all our indisputable Tibetan territories gradually included into India. As our delegates to the Asian Relations Conference (held in New Delhi in March, 1947) Theiji Sampho and Khenchung Lowang (had) approached the functionaries of Indian Government regarding the return of Tibetan territories on the boundaries of India and Tibet such as—Zayul, and Walung and in the direction of Pema Koe, Lonag, Lopa, Men, Bhutan, Sikkim, Darjeeling and others on this side of the river Ganges, and Lowo, Ladakh, etc., up to the boundary of Yarkhim.”

Indian mission in Lhasa was of the opinion that since autonomy was irksome to the Tibetans, they interpreted it to be ‘independence’ to satisfy the higher hierarchy, the Regent and the Dalai Lama, who was soon to

become major and assume the responsibilities of the government and the church, bringing certain distortions as “independence” and “return of territories” were pushed through. It may be pointed out here that there were over-lapping hierarchies in the Tibetan system of administration, which made decision-making a difficult process. At the apex was the Dalai Lama. Since, he was a minor all decisions on his behalf were taken by the Regent. There was the Kashag (cabinet). The foreign Bureau had two foreign secretaries—a monk and a lay. The National Assembly worked on the principle of unanimity and approved all the decisions of the Kashag. Then there were the three great monasteries which too had a hand in governance.

13. Given the problem of overlapping institutions, there was an attempt on the part of the Tibetan authorities to renege on the McMahon Line, which the Simla Convention of 1914 marked as the boundary between India and Tibet. The Indian Trade Agent in Gyantse and Officer-in-Charge of the Mission in Lhasa, Mr. H. E. Richardson remonstrated with the Tibetan Government and insisted that any further discussion that the Tibetans wanted to have on any new issues should not prejudice the old relationship which must be allowed to continue unhampered and that the McMahon Line, which had the sanction of the late Dalai Lama had to be respected if Tibet wanted any accommodation from New Delhi in future. The Tibetan Government’s wayward behaviour showed itself in their reply to Richardson in March 1948 insisting on the return of the territories, mentioned above. They insisted that their return would “be of great help in restoring the confidence of Tibetan people”. The Government of India taking the firm stand reminded Lhasa that India had “succeeded to the rights and obligations of HMG with regard to Tibet and will continue to abide by the existing treaties until either party should wish to enter into fresh arrangements”. Delhi also reminded Lhasa of their message of June 11 1948 delivered to Richardson that the Tibetan Government “are pleased to continue without any change the cordial relations existing between the two countries”. India assured Tibet that it was “committed under Article 2 of the Anglo-Tibetan Convention of 1914 not to annex Tibet or part of it” and that India stood by it.

14. In the meantime fast-paced developments were taking place in Peking on Tibet. The new regime insisting on Tibet to be an integral

part of China, threatened to “liberate” it by military means, despite Indian advice to negotiate with Lhasa for a peaceful settlement. Tibet, now worried about its future, was no longer asking for the return of the so called “Tibetan territories”. It rather begged New Delhi to recognise its independence. India only promised diplomatic support, which did not mean much for the beleaguered Lhasa. The U.K. and the U.S. who were also approached by the Tibetan administration for this purpose, were too found wanting.

15. Much before the communist established themselves in Peking, even the Nationalist Government of Chiang Kai Shek was seized of the question of establishing its control over Tibet which was a cause of concern to the British Government of India. In April 1944 the British Government found that China had launched a publicity campaign designed to give the impression to the world that “Tibet occupied no more than the position of a province of China.” The British too found that the Tibetans were not too much worried about it. HMG feared that China was moving towards eventual absorption of Tibet in China. The examples were:

1. delineation of Tibet as a province of China in the War map of China in the Handbook for 1943;
2. Publicity given by the Chinese to the proposal that it would open branches of its Central Bank in Lhasa and other cities;
3. press reports in February 1944 that Chinese Ministry of Communications would take over the Tibetan Postal service;
5. Lhasa’s message of congratulations on the assumption of the Presidency of China by Chiang Kai Shek was so manipulated to give the impression that Tibet recognised itself as a province of China, and acclaimed Chiang as its president.
6. In the revised version of Chiang Kai Shek’s book “China’s Destiny” an attempt was made to “to prove that the Tibetans, the Hans, Manchus, Mongols and Mohammedans” had a common ancestry.

16. While the British Government did not consider it prudent to warn China, a war-time ally, not to over-extend itself in Tibet, they reminded Lhasa of their treaty rights under Article V of the 1914 Convention and

assured it that as long as it “safeguarded” its “autonomous position” HMG would extend to Tibet any “diplomatic support, should it be needed” but no military support.

17. While applauding the Communist successes on the mainland and extending it recognition too, India was worried about their impact on Tibet and India’s interests there. The Indian Representative in Lhasa Richardson had warned Delhi that Chinese in control of Lhasa could ask India to close down its mission. Foreign Secretary agreed with Richardson and emphasised the need to continue the Indian Mission and also to continue to give moral support and supply of arms and ammunition to Tibet and also strengthening of India’s northern frontiers. The Secretary General in the Ministry of External Affairs G.S. Bajpai however feared that aid to Tibet could be taken as provocation by the Communists and therefore laid stress on “social and economic reforms” in Tibet besides while taking “precautionary military measures for the defence of our own frontier”.

18. Prime Minister Nehru in his policy note of 9<sup>th</sup> July 1949 directed that we “should certainly try to maintain and continue our friendly relations with the Tibetan Government and give them such aid as we have been giving them in the past”, stressed on the social and economic reforms as suggested by the Secretary General. He however cautioned that “we should be very careful in taking any measure which might be considered a challenge to Chinese Communist Government or which might mean an invasion of Tibetan sovereignty”. (Use of the word “sovereignty” was regretted by Delhi later) Nehru, unlike his officers, felt assured that whatever might be the fate of Tibet in relation to China, “there was practically no chance of any military danger to India arising from any possible change in Tibet (because) geographically, it is very difficult and practically it would be a foolish adventure”.

19. India had traditionally met the modest needs of the Tibetan army for arms and ammunition. Just as the Chinese were threatening to liberate Tibet, the worried Tibetan administration approached India for additional supplies of arms and training facilities for their army. On November 9, 1949, the Chiefs of Staff Committee which considered the developing situation in Tibet expressed the view that “there was every possibility that the communists would effectively force their suzerainty

over Outer-Tibet” by May 1950, having already established their control over Inner-Tibet. It was feared that “this would bring the Communists to the borders of India and it was politically or militarily difficult to counter such a move. Effective control of Outer-Tibet may raise the question of the defence of Nepal for us”. On December 1, 1949 Frank Roberts of the British High Commission suggested to Foreign Secretary K.P.S. Menon that in the prevailing uncertain situation, the Government of India “might consider doing something to keep up the morale of the Tibetan Government like giving diplomatic support, which the U.K. Government would be prepared to reinforce, and possibly, a supply of small arms which would suffice to keep the present Government going, at least for sometime”. He assured that the arms supplied by India to Tibet would be replenished by the British.

20. The Chief of Staff, in a meeting with the Officials of the Ministry of External Affairs including the Political Officer, Sikkim Hareshwar Dayal recommended a “policy of limited assistance to the Tibetans through supply of arms and facilities for training”. The Tibetans were asked to get in touch with the Indian Military Escort in Gyantse and convey to it their requirements. The Chief of Staff welcomed the British offer to replenish the supplies made to Tibet. The next day, December 30<sup>th</sup>, Prime Minister met with Foreign Secretary Menon, Ambassador Panikkar and Political Officer Dayal and discussed the policy on Tibet, including the supply of arms. Prime Minister suggested that while keeping the supplies as per existing understanding with Tibet, it would be desirable to give “a little more than has been customary”. He cautioned that supplies were made with great care so that they did not attract undue attention and give the impression that “the Government of India are actively encouraging the Tibetans to fight the Chinese.” PM also told the meeting that “it must be made clear to all concerned that any threat to Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, Ladakh or the McMahon Line areas will be resisted with all our force.”

21. On January 9, 1950 New Delhi advised Political Officer in Sikkim, that the Tibetan Government be informed that India would continue their relations with it on the basis of the 1914 Convention, and that it would help Tibet diplomatically with China. It was made known that effectiveness of Indian help would depend on maintenance by Tibet of friendly relations with China and for that, Tibet must make every effort to avoid bellicose statements and actions against China. The Political

Officer was however advised that given the Chinese policy on Tibet, no outside country was in a position to oppose China and that insistence on Tibetan independence was likely to affect Tibetan interest adversely and bring Tibet into direct collision with Communist Government in China. New Delhi was clear that it was not prepared to act as an instrument of any anti-Chinese bloc in Tibet or elsewhere. Effectively Tibetan obituary was written without trying any remedial strategy. The same advice was also conveyed to the Ministry of Defence on January 16. It was however advised to continue the supplies of arms and ammunition as before and the training of Tibetans be arranged at Gyantse by officers sent from India but attached to the Military Escort there.

22. Interestingly even before India had extended recognition to China, Panikkar on November 4, 1949 had cautioned New Delhi that “it is fairly certain that by May or June 1950 the Communists will intervene in Tibet” and that from the “military point of view there was nothing to stop them from invading and conquering Tibet.” He debunked the idea of impenetrability of Tibet because of its difficult geography and inhospitable climate since during the past hundred years Tibet had been invaded four times, (i) by the Dogra armies, (ii) by the Gurkhas during the Nepal-Tibet war; (iii) by the British during the Younghusband expedition and (iv) in 1910 by Chaoer Feng from the Chinese side. The inaccessibility of Tibet was a myth, Panikkar said. He did not even accept Tibet as a buffer any more. If China decided to make its suzerainty effective, India’s right to intervene would be questionable as long as its treaty interests, trade rights, and recognised boundary were safeguarded, Panikkar argued. He insisted that India could safeguard its interest as derived from the treaties in Tibet through diplomatic channels, since Communists had not repudiated any treaty “negotiated before 1948,” even if they had asked for their renegotiation if these were one-sided or unequal.

23. Foreign Secretary K.P.S. Menon in his comments said that Panikkar’s observations were in line with that of the Ministry and there was nothing to ‘save’ Tibet in a military sense and not much in diplomatic way either. His suggestion was that India must and should see that its “international boundaries with Tibet and China are respected by the new Government of China.” Menon however cautioned “that sooner we abandon such ideas as maintaining Tibet as a buffer state or of

political or military intervention, or of thinking wishfully about effective resistance by the Tibetans, the better we shall be able to deal with the issue on the diplomatic level.”

24. The Ministry of External Affairs did have its own worries, since the boundary with Tibet was based on the McMahon Line emerging from the Simla Convention of 1914, which China after initialling, had neither signed nor ratified. There was also doubt about Tibetans’ acceptance of the boundaries since they had been asking for the return of some of the areas which they insisted the British had seized during their rule in India.

25. The tentative view of the Secretary General of the Ministry G.S. Bajpai was that “we cannot and therefore should not expect to help the Tibetan Government militarily in order to pick a quarrel with and wage a war against the Communists”. When Prime Minister Nehru saw the note on November 21, 1949 he simply initialled without any comments. He however, earlier on July 8, 1949, in a note on policy towards Tibet, had expressed confidence about the continuation of the Indian Mission in Lhasa while expressing the need to maintain friendly relations with the Tibetan Government. He too recommended social and economic reforms. It was an enigmatic statement from Nehru that “we should be very careful in taking any measures which might be considered a challenge to Chinese Communist Government or which might mean an *invasion of Tibetan sovereignty*.” This was contradictory of the position conveyed to China by India that Tibet was autonomous under Chinese “sovereignty”, which was latter accepted as a mistake and in subsequent communications the only term used was ‘suzerainty’.

26. As far as Indian border with Tibet was concerned, Nehru reiterated that there was no chance of any military threat to India because of geographical factors. He did not want the Ministry of Defence to “consider possible military repercussions on the Indian-Tibetan frontier” since there was a remote possibility of it. At a press conference on November 10, 1949 Nehru said China’s position vis-à-vis Tibet was “a vague kind of suzerainty...and in a vague sense we have accepted the fact of China’s suzerainty. How far it goes, one does not know”.

27. On December 17, 1949 Nehru told the Standing Committee of the Central Legislature for the Ministry of External Affairs that he was not sure what would happen to Tibet but if the Chinese wish to enter



Tibet there was “none to hold them back except perhaps, the climate”. He continued to assert “there is no danger to India of anyone sweeping down the Himalayas. There is also no danger of invasion of Assam or Nepal.” He did not however rule out the possibility of “guerrilla bands, irregular or fifth columnists” activities from across the border. He continued to build his confidence on the geographic and climatic factors than on India’s own strength to defend itself or its smaller neighbours.

28. Meanwhile on November 29, 1949 the Embassy in Nanking reported that the Chinese media gave wide publicity to messages from Panchan Lama to Mao Tse tung and Chu Teh ‘wishing liberation of Tibet’ and in reply both assured him that “the People’s Government and the Liberation Army will satisfy the wish of Tibet” and expected that the people of Tibet would join the struggle for its liberation. In the hope of pre-empting Chinese threatened action, on November 9, 1949 the Tibetan Government addressed a letter to Mao Tse-tung establishing Tibetan independence and asking an assurance that “no Chinese troops would cross Tibetan frontier from the Sino-Tibetan border, or any such military action.” Simultaneously, in separate telegrams to the U.K. Foreign Secretary Bevin and the U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson Tibet asserted its independence and in view of the impending threat from China, vainly asked for help in getting admission to the UNO.

29. It was now evident that without much delay China would end the anomalous situation of Tibet and establish its effective control on the roof of the world. On January 26, 1950 Chinese issued a statement advising all countries that Tibet was Chinese territory and no country should help it in any contrary manner.

30. As reports of imminent Chinese attack on Tibet grew shriller, the Political Officer in Sikkim on August 16, 1950 cautioned New Delhi that the domination of Tibet by China would “cause nervousness and unrest among border peoples along whole of India’s northern frontier from Ladakh to Assam and policing of that frontier which has hitherto required negligible military effort and expenditure, would assume immediate political importance.” His stand was that since India had opposed aggression on a reactionary regime in Korea, New Delhi “could not



in the circumstances condone aggression on Tibet from Chinese side of the de facto border. He disputed Chinese pretence of freeing Tibet from the Anglo-American influences. Heeding the P.O.'s advice, New Delhi asked Ambassador Panikkar to subtly convey to Peking Indian apprehensions and advised against use of force particularly when Tibetans were prepared to negotiate for a peaceful solution.

31. In August Ambassador Panikkar was told by Chou En lai that Tibet was an internal problem of China and repudiated that Tibet had anything like "semi-autonomous status" and China would not accept any solution which limited Chinese sovereignty there. Ironically Panikkar compared the Chinese position vis-à-vis Tibet to our position vis-à-vis Hyderabad. He felt confident that China would "not proceed to take military action unless Tibetans proved themselves too obdurate". Since China had suspected presence of Nepalese troops in Tibet, (which later proved to be false), China warned against the presence of any foreign troops there.

32. In an aide memoire of August 24, 1950 Delhi appreciated the Chinese assurance of settling their relations with Tibet peacefully. On its part India assured Peking that it had "no material or territorial ambitions in Tibet." Later when there was delay in the arrival of Tibetan delegation in Peking to negotiate the new relationship, China justified its decision to the use of force to 'liberate' Tibet. The delegation which while in Delhi had met the Prime Minister on September 6, 1950 was held up due to visa problems. It now became jittery in going to Peking since it feared it would not get the required freedom to negotiate a fair agreement and pleaded for discussions either in Delhi or Hong Kong which the Chinese ruled out.

33. The Chinese Ambassador to pre-empt intervention by India in Tibet, told the Foreign Secretary on October 17, 1950 that 'Tibet was a part of Chinese territory and the problem of Tibet was Chinese internal problem. It was the intention of the People's Liberation Army to enter Tibet and defend China's clearly defined boundaries.' In view of 'friendly relations between India and China, the latter would like to solve the problem peacefully and asked the Government of India to facilitate the expeditious departure of Tibetan delegation to Peking held up in Delhi. Meanwhile on October 17 Lhasa informed New Delhi of the

Chinese army closing in on Tibet and that the Chinese plan seemed to isolate Tibetan forces in Chamdo from where there was a direct road to Lhasa. On October 19, Nehru conveyed to Ambassador Panikkar to discreetly warn China against its military approach. He said

‘it was quite clear to us that any invasion of Tibet by the Chinese troops will have serious consequences in regard to their position in the UN. It would strengthen the hands of the enemies of China and weaken those who are supporting China’s cause there.’

India therefore advocated a peaceful approach to this question and warned Peking, “the recent developments in Korea had not strengthened China’s position which would be further weakened by any aggressive action in Tibet.’

34. Two days later India formally, in a note, conveyed its apprehensions to Peking if military action was taken. The note assured China that India’s interest in cautioning Peking was to ensure that its actions did not again postpone the admission of China to the UN. There was no response from Peking. On the contrary reports of Chinese aggressiveness continued to pour in from Lhasa. India kept reminding Peking of the need to hold their action and sort out the problem peacefully by negotiations with the Tibetan delegation which would be in Peking shortly. India also assured China that neither the U.K. nor the U.S. had any access to Tibet and there was no question of India allowing them any access either and therefore China’s fear of foreign interference or foreign influence impacting Tibet were misplaced. Yet again in his letter of 25<sup>th</sup> October to Panikkar Nehru termed Chinese attitude towards Tibet “incomprehensible” and emphasised the futility of any military action, which he was convinced would hurt China’s interests. He told the Ambassador that if the Chinese think India was intriguing against China, “then all I can say is that they are less intelligent than I thought them to be”. The Chinese were still unmoved and made no response to Indian apprehensions.

35. In yet another demarche on October 26, India expressed regrets at the reported Chinese Official statement ordering army units to “advance into Tibet” repeating the same concerns which it had expressed earlier. On the same day Foreign Secretary Menon, in the absence of the Chinese Ambassador from New Delhi met the Chinese Counsellor

Shen Chein, and expressed “shock” at the reports of Chinese orders to the army to advance into Tibet. Shen however repudiated Menon describing the Chinese advance into Tibet as “invasion” suggesting that Tibet was part of China and therefore the term “invasion was incorrect”.

36. Chinese turned a deaf ear to Delhi’s repeated entreaties. An upset Ministry of External Affairs took its frustration out on the Ambassador Panikkar accusing him for making “half-hearted” representations which failed to convey Indian “sentiments with anything the force with which we expected him to do so.” He was accused of not having realised that

“not merely India’s honour but her interests are involved in a satisfactory settlement of the Tibetan problem. The McMahon Line, our trade marts in Gyantse and Yatung and our representation in Lhasa all these will now be in jeopardy and more than these, interests of world peace will be retarded.”

Nehru too joined in this chorus and reprimanded Panikkar that “we cannot help thinking that your representation to the Chinese Government was weak and apologetic.” The Ambassador suffered the collateral damage of New Delhi’s exasperation in failing to influence Peking. Delhi did not realise that Peking was not amenable to outside influences where its own interests were involved.

37. On October 27, Lhasa reported the situation being “grim” in the face of Chinese advances at several places. India had already indicated to Lhasa its “hesitation” to sponsor Tibetan appeal to the UN. Tibetans were shocked to listen to All India Radio denying reports of Chinese invasion even when Peking was loudly blaring forth that their armies have been ordered into Tibet. The AIR broadcast of 25<sup>th</sup> October quoting MEA spokesman that the Chinese armies would find it “insuperable to negotiate mountains of Eastern Tibet in mid-winter”. India watched helplessly as the Chinese unmindful of Indian pleadings, crossed the so-called impenetrable barriers of geography and “liberated” Tibet and made it part of the communist “empire”.

38. As the Chinese were closing on Lhasa, the Tibetan administration toyed with the idea of Dalai Lama leaving Lhasa and seeking asylum in India. On October 28 Indian Mission in Lhasa reported to New Delhi the “joint decision arrived at after due deliberations by the Dalai Lama, the Regent, the Kashag” that Dalai Lama should seek asylum in India and

sought New Delhi's assurances of his treatment commensurate with his position and dignity. New Delhi was also requested to intercede with Mao to stop military action. While India could do little to stop Chinese military action, its response was positive with regard to asylum for the Dalai Lama. The Political Officer in Gangtok was informed of Delhi's decision to grant him the political asylum.

39. When all appeared to have been lost in Tibet, Nehru told a press conference in New Delhi on October 27 that "it still is not clear what the Chinese Government's real intentions are." On October 29 India advised its missions in select countries that while India could not sponsor Tibet's appeal to the UN, India had no objection to Tibet making such an appeal directly.

40. The Chinese finally reacted to the repeated Indian demarches with a curt and admonishing Note of October 30<sup>th</sup>. It said that the Chinese Government:

"would like to make it clear that Tibet is a integral part of the 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."

41. Answering the Indian apprehensions that use of aggressive methods would prejudice Chinese case for admission to the UN, the note said:

"The problem of Tibet and the problem of the participation of the People's Republic of China in the UN 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 PRC is exercising its sovereign rights in its territory of Tibet and threaten to obstruct the participation of the PRC in the UNO, it is then but demonstration of the unfriendly and hostile attitude of such countries towards China".

Attacking India for terming the Chinese action as "deplorable", the note expressed its "deep regrets" and accused India of being affected by "foreign influences hostile to China in Tibet." Essentially this was also what the Ambassador in Peking was told by the Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister while handing over the above note.

42. A hurt and anguished India on November 1 expressed “amazement” at China accusation and completely denied charge of being affected by foreign influences. India insisted that its suggestion that Chinese suzerainty over Tibet and Tibetan autonomy should be reconciled by peaceful negotiations were not unwarranted interference in China’s internal affairs. New Delhi once again emphasised that it had no territorial ambitions in Tibet nor did it seek any privileged position for itself.

43. Nehru in his fortnightly letter of November 1, to the Chief Ministers of the States described the recent Chinese actions as having “hurt us considerably”, and termed them not only “wrong” but “foolish” as well. Nehru continued to minimise the impact of Chinese actions in Tibet on India and said:

“from a military point of view this has no great consequences and involves no particular danger to India. Tibet is very difficult country with an average altitude of 12,000 feet and then there is the great Himalayan barrier. It is an exceedingly difficult matter for any considerable body of men to cross into India over that barrier. But in any event we shall keep proper watch on our extended frontier to prevent any incidents happening.”

The Deputy Prime Minister Sardar Patel in his lengthy letter of November 7, 1950 to Nehru described summary rejection of Indian concerns by China as “a great discourtesy but also a wild insinuation that our attitude (was) determined by foreign influences”. Expressing unhappiness at Indian policy having forsaken Tibet which had put faith in India, he indicted Nehru for regarding China a friend, since he felt the Chinese did not regard India its friend. He foresaw in the “undefined state of the frontier and the existence on our side of a population with its affinities to the Tibetans or the Chinese” all the elements of the potential trouble between China and India. Given the problems with Pakistan, Patel warned in future India would have to take care of two fronts both against Pakistan and China, since the latter “has definite ambitions and aims and which does not, in any way, seem friendly disposed towards us.”

44. Chinese note of November 1 repeated the same old accusations against India and held it responsible for converting a domestic problem

of China into an international dispute and increasing “the present tensions in the world”. Waving an olive branch Peking expressed the hope 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.”

45. Nehru’s thinking remained dichotomous and actions faltering. In the same letter of November 1 to the Chief Minister of the States he made light of the impact of Chinese occupation of Tibet on India and said it involved ‘no particular danger to India from a military point of view’. But after a week on November 8, 1950 he accused China of showing India “extreme discourtesy”. However laying down the policy on East and South Asia, Nehru said “China’s aggression in Tibet immediately raises new frontier problems for us. We cannot be happy to have a strong centralised and communist Government in control of the Tibetan border with India and yet there are no obvious means of stopping this and even legally our position is not a strong one”. He suddenly sounded worried about the future. Giving up his earlier pretence of the impregnability of the Himalayas, he conceded that the new China with “its newborn strength and dynamism and certain aggressiveness” coming right up to the borders of India, when the “Himalayan barrier now was not being so effective as it used to be” is source of concern to India.

46. Suddenly he realised Pakistan’s presence on the western border, and said “our major possible enemy is Pakistan” and any deviation from this would weaken India. He did apprehend that in the event of India falling out with China, Pakistan would take advantage and in such a situation “the position of India will be bad from a defence point of view” and India would not be able to overcome it even by “increasing defence forces or even if other foreign countries help us in arming”. This was what Patel had also warned!

47. Speaking in Parliament on December 7, 1950 on Tibet, he lamented that contrary to Indian advice, China used force to “liberate” Tibet but he remained convinced that it would be difficult for the Chinese to deny the Tibetans their autonomy and said:

“But it is right and proper thing to say and I see no difficulty in saying to the Chinese Government whether they have suzerainty over Tibet or sovereignty over Tibet, surely, according to any principle, the principles they proclaim and the principles I uphold, the last voice in regard to Tibet should be the voice of the people of Tibet and nobody else.”

The Tibetan delegation sent to negotiate the agreement with China, signed it on May 23<sup>rd</sup> 1951, without authority from Lhasa, as the Tibetans maintained. The text of the 17 points was presented to it, but it was not allowed to negotiate any of the points. It finally received the Tibetan Government's approval via telegram on October 23, 1951.

48. Soon after the 17-Point agreement was signed there were reports of Dalai Lama abrogating it. In June 1951 the American Charge d' affaires Mr. Steere met S. Dutt, Additional Secretary in the MEA and told him that the Embassy had been approached by Tibetan representatives to suggest that the Dalai Lama was thinking of rejecting the agreement that had been arrived at in Peking between the Tibetan delegation and the Chinese Government since the delegation had not authority to make the agreement. After consulting Washington, Mr. Steere told Dutt that he had informed the Tibetans that while the American Government was “most sympathetic to Tibetan autonomy” the U.S. was “prepared to give such support as might be possible to the Dalai Lama if they issued a public statement rejecting the agreement.” The Dalai Lama failed to issue any disclaimer and finally conveyed his approval on October 23 with no alternative before him. The Peking Radio on October 29, 1951, in a message said: “Under the leadership of Mao Tse tung the People's Liberation Army units marching into Tibet to strengthen national defence, drive imperialist forces from Tibet, safeguard unification of the territorial sovereignty of the motherland.”

49. The Chinese occupation/liberation of Tibet left India and its Prime Minister in sullen and brooding mood. Nehru did not realise that the Chinese leaders were approaching the Tibetan question according to their own recent experience, while India had gone through a different experience in the struggle for independence. Indian freedom movement was non-violent and peaceful. Nehru believed that the power of the

people emerged from their moral and spiritual strength. Therefore his approach remained moral and ethical and this impacted his thinking on the Tibetan problem as well. Chinese leaders' experience, on the other hand, was just the opposite of India's. Chinese Communist Party under Mao's leadership was a powerful military machine and wrested power from the Nationalist Government after a long and bitter civil war extending for over two decades. Mao's dictum was that power grew from the barrel of the gun and that was what China did in Tibet. Chinese leaders were all battle hardened Marshals and Generals and had a big force in the People's Liberation Army which was battle-ready and ruthless. They were impatient leaders who had no time to waste on discussions what their army could clinch with little effort.

50. Chinese in handling Tibet proved ruthless and appeals in the name of friendship or Asian unity were of no consequence. On the contrary New Delhi continued to advocate China's seating in the UN Security Council out of its sense of idealism.

51. India accepted the Chinese occupation of Tibet as the *fait accompli* and that the Chinese could not be dislodged from Tibet and the Tibetans would be well advised to adjust themselves to the new situation. Any challenge to their authority would be crushed ruthlessly and end the autonomy whatever little was left of it. The new developments also brought fresh worries for New Delhi about border states like Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal. Nehru's recipe: India could be of greater assistance not only to itself but to others by maintaining friendly and straightforward relations with China and "at the same time showing firmness when vital interests are concerned." India, failing to read the Chinese psyche and draw the right conclusions had to face many more disappointments in its dealings with them in future.

52. In 1952 India moved a draft resolution in the UN General Assembly on the question of repatriation of prisoners of war in Korea, which it presumed was in line with the Chinese interests, as Nehru told the new Ambassador Raghavan that "right from the beginning we have endeavoured to take every step after some reference to them because we are convinced that any settlement must necessarily have their (Chinese) consent". But Peking found the resolution not to its liking and rebuked New Delhi in strong language. It accused Nehru of acting



on the American instigation since it perceived the resolution promoted the American point of view. On November 24, 1952 the *People's Daily* described the Indian draft an American proposal "in slightly different garb." Taking a pot shot, the daily said "bereft of verbiage its substance amounts to nothing but nonsensical principle of forcible screening and retention of prisoners as basis which is opposed to Geneva Convention..." China's rejection hurt New Delhi and it blamed the speech of Andrey Vyshinsky, the Soviet Representative at the UN which India perceived was "needlessly offensive" and had influenced the Chinese. Ambassador Raghavan in his lengthy meeting at the Waijiaobu (Chinese Foreign Office) failed to satisfy the Chinese about the Indian draft. On the contrary he regretted that "there was no mention of any appreciation or thanks for India's efforts". Nehru was deeply hurt at the Chinese Premier Chou describing the Indian resolution "parent of all evils". An anguished Prime Minister told the Foreign Secretary that he should tell the Chinese Ambassador that if India had chosen not to reply to the Chinese repeated criticism of the Indian draft, it was because "we are anxious to maintain our friendly relations with that great country" and India expected "a friendly country to refer to us in more friendly terms". He also asked the Indian Ambassador to point out to the Chinese Government "not to accuse us in the way that is frequently done in most unfair and creates a bad impression on the Indian public." Yet he told the Ambassador that "our attitude to the Chinese government must continue to be both friendly and firm, (and) I would not like to lose contact with them".

53. The Chinese were least perturbed if the Indians were hurt by their reaction. On the contrary, in a strongly worded letter to the Indian Ambassador on March 8, 1953 China remained doubtful of the Indian intentions and described the resolution tilted in favour of the United States against China. Casting doubts on Indian intentions the letter said:

"...the series of actions on the part of the Indian Government cannot but cause the Chinese Government to believe that either the Indian Government deliberately misinterpreted the friendship and sincerity of the Chinese Government, or it was gravely heedless of the principle and stand which the Chinese Government consistently maintained. Although in your letter you

expressed goodwill towards China, unfortunately, this goodwill has not been borne out by facts”.

54. From the beginning of the controversy Nehru was keen that this issue of Chinese rejection of the Indian draft be kept secret. Given the limited reach of the media in those days, it was not a difficult job. On November 25 he hoped that “as stated publicity would not be given to it” (Chinese rejection of Indian draft). On the next day he informed Ambassador Raghavan that “we have kept the Chinese aide memoire secret and do not propose to give it any publicity”. When Ambassador Raghavan, after checking with the Chinese, confirmed to Nehru that the Chinese were “not giving any publicity to their aide memoire either or rejection of our Resolution” he heaved a sigh of relief. Nehru kept the whole episode under wrap.

55. India however, remained solicitous of Chinese friendship and interests notwithstanding China showing little concern where Indian interests were involved. In the negotiations for the agreement on Tibet in 1954, India was eager and anxious to bring in Ladakh in some way within the ambit of the agreement to indirectly commit China on its side on the question of Jammu and Kashmir. China flatly refused to concede Indian proposal for inclusion in the agreement, pilgrimage facilities for the Ladakhi lamas or Ladakh’s trade with Tibet within the agreement on account of Jammu and Kashmir State being disputed between India and Pakistan. So much for Chinese friendship.

## II

### **India-China Agreement on Tibet**

56. India had inherited certain trading and some extraterritorial rights in terms of maintaining post and telegraph facilities, military escort for security of Indian facilities etc.. This became essential since Tibet lacked basic facilities to meet operational needs. Under the new circumstances after Chinese occupation of Tibet, despite there was no improvement in the facilities, these became anachronistic and were considered by China as compromising its sovereignty and dignity. India was conscious of this factor and was not unwilling to renegotiate new arrangements.

57. The Chinese Prime Minister Chou En lai in his meeting with the Indian Ambassador Panikkar on June 15, 1952 told him that China did not expect India to claim "special rights" arising from the unequal treaties of the past and was prepared to negotiate a new permanent relationship safeguarding legitimate Indian interests. In making this suggestion Chou did not wish to abruptly bring to an end institutions and arrangements which were in existence, like post and telegraph, trade marts etc., as such a course would create a vacuum. Thereafter China showed little urgency to initiate the necessary talks. On the contrary it tried to nibble away on them by creating one problem or another in the functioning of the Indian Mission in Lhasa and the trade agencies. The local Chinese authorities adopted harassing tactics and bringing them even to the notice of Peking did not resolve them either. Sometimes Mission's bags containing official letters in sealed covers would be seized and released after opening them and examining their contents unauthorisedly or wireless sets were seized, or couriers would be obstructed in their movements, or even the Consul General would be treated in a ham-handed manner. The Trade Agent at Gartok, responsible for trade in Western Tibet was obstructed and his licensed arms were seized, as also his wireless set. Any amount of protests whether at Lhasa or in Peking did not help to rectify the situation!

58. The worst case was of an Indian-protected Sikkimese, Sonam Phuntso and an Indian national from Kalimpong, Sonam Dorji in the employ of the Tibetan Government as wireless operators before the Chinese occupation, were arrested as the Chinese entered Lhasa. One of them, Sonam Phuntso escaped and took shelter in the Indian Mission. To demand his return, the Chinese surrounded the Indian Mission with armed troops. India strongly protested to the Local authorities and even took up the matter in Peking asking for their release but with little success.

59. Matters came to a head when it was time for the military escort in Gyantse to be replaced at the end of its tour of duty. But the Chinese did not allow replacement. However due to their delayed decision, the replacement escort arrived in Gyantse. Chinese obstructed the departure of the troops who had completed their tour of duty, causing logistical problems.

60. Recognising the new situation that had arisen in Tibet, India showed willingness to give up the old privileges, to end the legacy of the past, while retaining the trading and pilgrimage facilities by mutual agreement. As for example it showed readiness to give up its right to maintain a military escort at Gyantse.

61. In the face of these difficulties the Prime Minister personally addressed the Chinese Premier Chou En lai suggesting negotiations for “a final settlement about pending matters so as to avoid any misunderstanding and friction” indeed “difficulties and frictions have arisen from time to time over relatively petty matters.” The Chinese having agreed to the suggestion for talks, a two-man Indian delegation from the Ministry was sent to Peking and the Ambassador Raghavan led the delegation.

62. The negotiations for the agreement which started on January 1, 1954 were concluded after four months of intense and prolonged negotiations and an agreement signed on 29<sup>th</sup> April 1954. India’s expectations that the conclusion of the agreement expeditiously, would send a signal to the world of the existence of cordial and warm relations between the two countries were belied. This despite the fact that Chou En lai while receiving the Indian delegation on the first day had said “we could show to the outside world that two great Asian countries left to themselves could solve all their problems smoothly and amicably ... and thus create a record”. A world record was indeed created but of a different kind.

63. The Chinese did not raise the border question and since India had decided not to raise it itself, it did not figure in the Peking talks. The Chinese used clever language to avoid discussion of the frontier at this stage. At the initial stages of the talks, the Chinese chief delegate Chang Han-fu had said that all the pending questions that “are ripe for settlement” could be solved by the application of five principles of peaceful co-existence.

64. The major points for discussion were trade agencies, post and telegraph, rest houses, pilgrimage and passport and visa etc. India succeeded in retaining its trade agencies, only when it accepted reciprocally equal number of Chinese trade agencies in India and after resisting their demand for establishing agencies at remote and

sensitive places like Almora, Shillong or Dehra Dun which were not normal trading places for Chinese trade. Other facilities to the trade agents were accepted but on reciprocal basis. Pilgrimage as such, did not pose any problem but Chinese did not accept pilgrimage facilities for Ladakhi lamas, or trade between Ladakh and Tibet in the agreement, as pointed out earlier, on the plea that Ladakh was part of a disputed state and China did not want to get involved in it. It may be mentioned that later in 1956 China did not accept Indian proposal for the visit of a trade mission from Ladakh to Tibet on the same ground.

65. Post and telegraph facilities which India had been operating were given up as also the guest and rest houses used by the officers and staff of the mission and trade agencies while on tour. Chinese however, agreed to accommodate the requests from Indian touring staff for accommodation at the guest and rest houses.

66. Chinese indulged in foot-dragging on all issues until the patience of the Indian delegation was exhausted and it gave in to their point of view. They pitched their demands on reciprocal basis while there were different conditions of life in India and Tibet, and needed different treatment. This contributed to the delay in negotiating the agreement. For instance, India had fully developed resting places, communications and transport facilities, unlike in Tibet where even rudimentary facilities in these respects were non-existent, and hence needed different consideration and approach than in relation to India. But Chinese insistence on reciprocity in every way on even trifling issues and semantics made negotiations difficult and prolonged. It was India which had often to give up on "petty points of differences" and accept the changes in the agreement on so-called minor matters in the vain hope that China would also act in the same spirit.

67. India agreed to transfer to China the post and telegraph facilities as a gift from Government of India. Regarding guest and rest Houses, these were transferred on payment of reasonable compensation. India agreed to withdraw the military escort within six months. The Chinese delegation which negotiated the agreement had no Tibetan participation, even when the entire document related to Tibet.

68. Prime Minister Nehru while announcing the agreement in the Lok Sabha on May 15, 1954 said it was based on the five wholesome

principles of mutual interests and hoped that the two countries “which have now almost 1800 miles of frontier, should live on terms of peace and friendliness, respect each other’s sovereignty and integrity, and agree not to interfere with each other in any way and not to commit aggression on each other”.

69. T.N. Kaul, who was one of the members of the delegation who negotiated the agreement, in his report to the Ministry likened dealing with the Chinese as a game of patience and “he who loses patience loses the game”. Chinese were in no hurry. It was the Indian delegation which had to cool its heels in Peking for four months, who had to worry over the delay.

70. Prime Minister in his comments on Kaul’s report made an important observation. He said in future negotiations with the Chinese should be held in Delhi and not in Peking. It was in pursuance of this directive of the Prime Minister that the negotiations for a trade agreement in October 1954 were conducted in Delhi and the agreement signed. He also desired that India should set up check-posts at all disputed points and “our administration should be right up to these border.” He was against any non-aggression pact with China.

71. In his comments on another report by the other participant in the talks, Dr. Gopalachari, Nehru described the agreement as a “new starting point for our relations with China and Tibet.” He desired that in future India should give up reference to McMahon Line, and “show the northern and northeaster frontier without reference to any line”.

72. The significant point the Prime Minister made was that India’s frontier had been “finalised not only by implication in this agreement but the specific passes mentioned are direct recognition of our frontier”. He believed the Agreement on Tibet was “recognition of a factual situation which we could not possibly change”. He again fell back on geography as the best panacea for Tibetan problems. He believed that its inhospitable climate cannot maintain large number of foreigners, and “if the Tibetans are stout enough to keep the spirit of freedom alive, they will maintain a large measure of autonomy and the Chinese will not interfere”. Unfortunately these presumptions did not stand the test of time.

73. An important point which went unnoticed was the nomenclature of the Agreement: "Agreement Between The Republic of India and the People's Republic of China on Trade and Intercourse between Tibet Region of China and India". India accepted Tibet as 'region of China' and not an 'Autonomous Region' at the very beginning. It is a different matter that the Chinese had accepted Tibetan autonomy, but in this formal document India failed to ensure that its autonomy was accepted. To canvass for its autonomy later looked a little out of place.

74. Ambassador Raghavan who had been in Peking by now for almost eighteen months and had interacted with the Chinese as the leader of the Indian delegation made the following observations to the Prime Minister about the Chinese attitude towards India:

- i. Chinese unlike Indians were neither warm hearted nor emotional people.
- ii. They evaluate friendship from the standpoint of its usefulness to China.
- iii. They distinguish between the people of India and the Government of India, remaining warm to the people.
- iv. They play down and belittle the achievements of India.
- v. They project India as a capitalist country suffering from all the economic and political ills of capitalism, colonialism and feudalism.
- vi. To make use of India and her independent role in international affairs but to see as far as possible that by doing so, India did not increase its stature in international fields so that China's ultimate role as the leading Asian power was in no manner effected or threatened.

His assessment was that the Chinese believed that if India remained impartial in the Korean war, it had no other go. Studying the Chinese media he found that no positive developments in India were noted in there or otherwise. However anything that gave a negative impression of India was reported unless it had something to do with the Communist Party of India or its front organisations. He however did not fail to note the following positive trends:

- i. Greater appreciation for the Prime Minister as a reliable Asian statesman;
- ii. Greater appreciation by the Chinese Prime Minister personally of Indian role in Asian and world affairs; and
- iii. Realisation that Indians were peaceful and peace-loving people.

75. Meanwhile the Political Officer in Gangtok noted that it cannot be guaranteed that the Chinese would not interfere in Tibet. Nehru however observed that the Agreement was not a permanent guarantee but one first major step. In any case he believed the Chinese had been expansive “in various periods of their history for a thousand year or so” and we were “facing a new period of such expansionism”.

76. As the Geneva Conference concluded, Chou En lai accepting the Prime Minister’s invitation broke his journey back home for a three-day stay to India, which marked the beginning of the phase of great bonhomie (*Hindi-Chini bhai bhai*) which lasted for some time until the differences on the India-China frontier set the two countries apart. During the visit Chou and Nehru talked everything under the sun, except India’s historical interest in Tibet or Tibet’s autonomy, something which was fundamentally important to the bilateral relations or the frontier question. They extolled the virtuous of the five principles which were incorporated in the agreement on Tibet and presented it to the world as a panacea for world’s problems. In his letter to Ambassador Raghavan on the visit of Chou on June 29, 1954 Nehru said “the important thing is that India-China relations will now be on a somewhat different and closer basis”. Chou invited the Prime Minister for a visit to China, which he accepted and made use of it in the same year, visiting China in October.

77. The Prime Minister, at a press conference before his visit to China (October 15) described it and the meeting between the leaders of the two countries “a very big thing itself and a world event”. In China he had three meetings (on October 19, 23 and 26) with Mao Tse tung. All their talks centred on the question of war and peace and dominance of big powers that had been bullies in history. Mao’s concern was vis-à-vis the United States. Nehru told Mao that many smaller countries in Asia



too feared the “two big and great countries, China and India”. He said while “this might be baseless fear, but the fact remains that there was such a fear”. On Mao asking the reasons for this fear, he said while “we cannot analyse this fear and find out what exactly causes it, but is important that we should remove this fear from the minds of smaller countries”. Mao remained sceptical. Mao felt it was the population factor which was worrying them, since they feel “greater population would mean aggression”. There was hardly any in-depth discussion on any issue of bilateral interest. While there was no record on the Indian side of the conversation at the banquet, according to the Chinese record Ambassador Raghavan (at the banquet) reportedly said that “what China does in Tibet is China’s own business. India trusts China.” He was also quoted to have said: “when he was appointed ambassador to China, Nehru had instructed him to trust China, just as China trusts India.”

78. Nehru had extensive talks with Chou En lai on October 20, 21 and 26. Nehru told Chou that Pakistan’s acceptance of military aid while preliminary agreement (on Kashmir) had been made, changed the context and things became different. Chou agreed that Pakistan’s acceptance of military aid “would have unfavourable effect on Asia as also on Indo-Pakistan relations”. He said that he explained this “several times to them (Pakistanis) but it seems difficult to make them understand”. Both generally talked about international political scene and the world affairs like SEATO, disarmament, America and Taiwan, Africa, Southeast Asia, Colombo Powers and the proposed Bandung Conference, Overseas Chinese, etc. There was also discussion about Nepal, and Chou showed his interest in starting relations with Nepal. Nehru gave him the past developments leading to the restoration of the monarchy in Nepal. He said while India regarded Nepal an independent country, her foreign policy was coordinated with that of the Indian policy. He was worried if China opened an embassy in Kathmandu, the United States too would insist on having its own embassy in Kathmandu. He said America was already making troubles in Nepal. Chou said in that case China would accredit its ambassador in New Delhi to Kathmandu.

79. Talking of bilateral relations, Chou suggested flights of Indian airlines to China, greater mutual cooperation and assistance between

the two countries, deputation of Indian experts to China in certain areas. There was little discussion on India's interest in Tibet or the question of Tibet. Nehru as a matter of policy avoided any discussion on the frontier question except the remarks referred to above. However in his note on his visit to China which he recorded on return, he again referred to Chinese maps showing "portions of Burma and even of India as if they were Chinese territories. So far as India was concerned, I added, we are not much concerned about this matter because our boundaries were quite clear and were not a matter for argument." On Chou suggesting that their maps were old, Nehru remarked "there was no doubt about our boundaries and I was not worried about them".

80. Nehru was deeply impressed by the new China and the reception he received, as he mentioned to Chou En lai in his letter of October 29, 1954. From China, in a telegram to the Foreign Secretary he said "our reception here has been on tremendous scale surpassing anything done previously".

81. Clarifying his remarks about Nepal while in China, Nehru told a press conference in Delhi (November 13, 1954) that "So far as Nepal is concerned, it is a well known fact and it is needless for me to state, it is contained in our treaties and in our other agreements with Nepal, that we have special position in Nepal—not interfering with their independence but not looking with favour anybody else's interfering with their independence either."

82. In his statement to Parliament on November 22, he said:

"Briefly put, I would say that the political consequences of my visit to China were a deeper understanding between India and China and what they stand for and what they work for and a knowledge that there is much in common in the tasks that confront them, and it is desirable for them to cooperate in a large a measure as possible. India, as she is situated geographically and politically, can be of some service in interpreting some countries to others and thus helping to remove misunderstandings."

83. The Ambassador Raghavan's report on the visit of the Prime Minister was effusive. He said that the Geneva Conference and Prime

Minister's visit made Chou En lai "grow in stature". This was in contrast to his earlier assessment of China. It may be recalled that in his earlier assessment he had said that China was niggardly in appreciating Indian achievements, and projected India as a capitalist country suffering from all the economic ills of capitalism and many more problems. He now accepted that his was not the correct assessment then. He recognised that the scene had undergone a radical transformation, and China is now anxious to cultivate Indian friendship and cordial relations.

84. Back in Tibet things were not going smoothly even after the Agreement on Tibet. The implementation of the agreement was tardy and created several problems. Almost within four months, on September 7, Political Officer reported that "the Chinese Government have taken non-substantial steps to implement the agreement after its ratification by both governments, but past practices in the matter of trade and pilgrimage continue."

85. The use of rest house and Dak bungalows by the Mission's couriers created their own problems. The visit of Indian Trade Agent to Taklakot was obstructed. The visit of Kushak Bakula, a deputy minister in the Kashmir Government for pilgrimage was accepted as a private visit and not as a Deputy Minister of J&K. In the assessment of the Mission in Lhasa it was due to China's reluctance to accord any kind of tacit recognition to Ladhak's status as an integral part of India. Within months of the signing of the Agreement in April 1954, the trade agency at Gyantse, which was a Government of India property, got washed away in the unprecedented floods with loss of life. The Chinese prevented the reconstruction of the agency building for years on one pretext or the other. In August 1956, it was found that the Indian pilgrims to Kailash and Mansarover had to "undergo considerable inconvenience and indignities at the various check-posts". Over time these difficulties of the Indian Consul General and the Trade Agents became so serious that it was considered appropriate and necessary to present a formal note to the Chinese at the time of Nehru-Chou En lai talks in April 1960 on the Sino-Indian border.

86. Ignoring the problems in India-China relations, particularly in Tibet, Prime Minister remained steadfast in his belief that China remained

desirous of peace and that “the Chinese had no expansionist aims”. In addressing the Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Conference in London on January 31, 1955, he cautioned them that “a great nation, such as China was bound to feel resentment at any threat of dictation, and any approach to China which was based on threats would not succeed and might well have a result contrary to that intended”.

87. In the meantime there were regular reports of resistance to the Chinese rule by the Tibetan officials who were coerced into submission by the highhandedness of the Chinese bosses. A note of April 17, 1955 prepared in the Ministry of External Affairs noted the resistance the Chinese rule was encountering in Tibet on account of Chinese “over-lordship”. It however concluded that there was “no immediate threat from China to India, at present, or for the next few years”. It however cautioned that “we cannot take this as an absolute guarantee for the future”. The note feared that the Chinese would “absorb the Tibetan people and colonise Tibet, as they did to Manchuria”.

88. However Foreign Secretary R.K. Nehru in his note of April 24 justified the various actions of the Chinese in Tibet for greater integration and admitted that “some coercion may have taken place in the earlier stages of the occupation”. He said India “need not be alarmed by these measures, which the Chinese have every right to take and some of which we ourselves might have taken in similar circumstances”.

89. In 1956 India organised celebrations of the 2500 years of the birth of Buddha on a grand scale and invited Dalai Lama to attend these celebrations. Dalai Lama taking advantage of the visit did tell Nehru of his feeling of suffocation under the Chinese occupation and was reluctant to return to Tibet. But on Nehru’s persuasion went back.

90. In 1957 Nehru had decided to visit Tibet and the Dalai Lama was equally anxious for it. The Chinese were not unaware of the Dalai Lama’s unhappiness either. While the Chinese did not straight away denied Nehru’s desire for a visit, they kept him waiting and expecting for too long that he finally lost his patience and dropped the idea and instead visited Bhutan.

## III

**Revolt in Tibet and Flight of Dalai Lama to India**

91. After the occupation of Tibet by the Chinese the Tibetans were not reconciled and there was no smooth functioning of the Chinese controlled Tibetan administration. The 17-Point Agreement was observed more in breach than in observance. The monasteries and lamas continued to be sullen at the over bearing attitude of the Chinese and their attempt to undermine their spiritual and religious practices. Even the Dalai Lama's position was systematically undermined by the Chinese.

92. The Political Officer Apa Pant after spending almost three months (November 1956– February 1957) extensively touring Tibet and meeting all the important personalities both Tibetan (lay and religious) and Chinese made a very lengthy report running into 50 paragraphs to the Ministry and expressed his apprehension that

“if Tibet turns into a communist country and has a government guided and inspired by the Chinese there is no doubt that she will certainly exert pressure on our frontiers—or as a matter of fact China will. Whatever the assurances given from time to time to us, it is evident that the Chinese would also not be able to resist the temptation of “calling back to their motherland” all those who belong to the “Chinese family”. Bhutan, Sikkim, districts of Darjeeling and Kalimpong as well as parts of NEFA, Ladakh would be the areas to which such a “call” would be sent.” This may not happen within the next 20 years, but the possibility of it happening under certain circumstances exist and we just cannot close our eyes to it.”

He held out the possibility of nationalist forces in Tibet rising against the Chinese. He believed that some of these forces were in touch with the outside powers like Nepal, the United States and the United Kingdom for getting small arms and ammunition and thousands of hand grenades smuggled across Nepal into Tibet.

93. The Prime Minister after reading the letter felt that Pant being so much impressed by certain facts had lost perspective and that his assessment therefore ceased to be “objective”. Regarding Pant's

observation that India might have to feel the pressures on its frontiers in the future, Nehru felt it was rather a “static and even out of date view of the forces that are at work in the world. If these pressures come, other and new forces will also arise in India or in the rest of the world”. Regarding smuggling of arms etc., into Tibet, Prime Minister felt it needed to be checked further.

94. The Khampas who though not exactly of Tibetan stock had accepted the superior position of the Dalai Lama and were the first to rise in revolt in 1956 and their revolt went on for three years until in 1959 they killed Chinese garrisons and convoys and the Chinese Government retaliated by heavy bombing, killing hundreds of them. The distrust among other Tibetans too increased to the boiling point by the March of 1959 that the word of Chinese ceased to have credibility with them. In 1959 there were rumours that the Chinese were planning to take the Dalai Lama to Peking ostensibly for a visit but with the intention not to let him return to Tibet. When the Dalai was invited by the Chinese to their camp in Lhasa for a lunch and cultural performance on March 10, the Tibetan suspecting it a ploy to detain him, prevented him from leaving his headquarters for this engagement and raised the banner of revolt. The lay and spiritual officials boycotted official work and announced that Tibet was ‘free’ and the Chinese must leave Tibet. On March 14, the Political Officer from Gangtok after talking to the C.G. at Lhasa told the Ministry that while the Chinese were trying for some reconciliation for the time being, warned of Chinese reprisals against the Tibetans, including their massacre. He also held out the possibility of the Dalai Lama leaving Tibet and seeking asylum in India as also the possibility of mass exodus of Tibetans to India.

95. It was under these circumstances that the Dalai Lama reportedly left Lhasa on March 17 unannounced and headed towards Lokha, which was also confirmed by the Chinese in Lhasa. India had already taken a decision in principle to give him asylum if he came to India and informed the C.G. Gangtok of the decision. The Government of India becoming aware of the Dalai Lama’s whereabouts and his possible arrival in India made sure that the news did not leak out lest it should compromise his security.

96. Prime Minister in his statement in the Lok Sabha on March 17, once again reiterated that “no country had ever recognised independence

of Tibet and we certainly did not; it was inevitable, therefore for us to recognise the Chinese suzerainty: call it suzerainty or sovereignty". Describing the situation in Tibet difficult, he said; it (was) more a clash of wills than, at present, a clash of arms or a clash of physical bodies". By now the revolt had spread to other part of Tibet as well.

97. The Chinese Military Command Commission now decided to take over the administration and delegated the authority to a Preparatory Committee with Panchan Lama as Chairman, *vice* Dalai Lama who was described as "held under duress". Eighteen high ranking Tibetans were declared "traitors" and relieved of their posts. A Hsinhua communiqué warned India that discussion of internal affairs of China in the Indian Parliament would be "impolite and improper". It described Kalimpong as the "commanding centre of rebels."

98. On March 21 the Vice Director of Foreign Bureau in Lhasa while assuring the Consul General personally of his and his staff's full security cautioned him that Tibet was an internal affair of China and no interference from outside was allowed. This message was also conveyed to the Ambassador in Peking.

99. In another statement on March 23 the Prime Minister assured the Lok Sabha about the safety of the members of the Consulate in Lhasa and hoped that the Dalai Lama was safe.

100. On March 25, the Prime Minister in his fortnightly letter to the Chief Ministers of the States dealt at some length with the troubles in Tibet tracing the history right from 1950 and gave details of the Khampa revolt, which had spread to various parts of Tibet. He however said the Tibetan Government in Lhasa "did not associate with them in any way, though probably there was much sympathy for them". Recently he said the Tibetans complained of China breaking the 17-point agreement, while Chinese complained the same of the Tibetans. He warned, the future therefore, appeared to be full of troubles for Tibet and Tibetans.

101. Dalai Lama in his message to the Prime Minister gave details of the troubles in Tibet and informed him of the circumstances under which he had to leave Lhasa. He expressed the hope that the Government of India would make "necessary arrangements for (them) in the Indian territory". On the same day, however the Prime Minister, for the safety

of the Dalai Lama, told his sister and High Commissioner in London that where about of the Dalai Lama were not known.

102. The Advisor to the Governor of Assam, the in-charge of the affairs of Northeast, was informed of the decision to grant the Dalai Lama asylum and while asking him to make all arrangements for his reception and onward journey cautioned him on the need to keep complete secrecy of his movements lest his security should be compromised.

103. In the meantime the Counsel General in Lhasa repeatedly reported that Chinese plane had been flying over the area south of Lhasa either to drop fresh troops in the south or for reconnaissance. On March 30 Indian Embassy in Moscow reported that *Pravda* had published an article "failure of reactionary insurrection in Tibet" based entirely on Chinese sources. On March 31 the Central Committee of the CPSU issued a Report prepared on the basis of Chinese sources.

104. On April 1 the Advisor to Governor, Assam, reported that the Dalai Lama and his entourage of eight had crossed into the Indian territory evening of March 31. This information was given to the Lok Sabha on April 3 by the Prime Minister. On April 3 the Prime Minister in his message to the Dalai Lama assured him of all necessary facilities for him, his family and entourage. He was advised however not to issue any long statement to the press at this stage. P.N. Menon who had earlier served in Lhasa as Counsel General was deputed to the Dalai Lama to act as the Senior Liaison Officer.

105. Dalai Lama talking to the Political Officer of the Kamong Frontier Division Har Mander Singh, who had received him on arrival in India, said the Tibetan army and the Khampas were fighting the 50,000-strong Chinese army and they were short of arms and ammunition and medical supplies which he expected the Government of India to provide. He himself appreciated that "his demand sounded excessive and unlikely of fulfilment, but it was also obvious that he and his Government were in distress and they were not in a position to function or carry their aims further without the active help from the Government of India".

106. Next day all the senior officers of the Dalai Lama met Har Mander Singh and gave details of the humiliations the Tibetan had to suffer under the Chinese and the struggle being waged by the Khampas and the Tibetan army to get rid of the Chinese and suggested that "the



Dalai Lama having left Tibet wanted to maintain touch with the Tibetans forces fighting with the Chinese through special messengers. If they were to carry Government of India's travel permits, it was possible the certificates given by the Government of India may become known in the event of their capture, which would not be desirable. It was therefore proposed that such messengers should carry papers bearing special identity marks to be devised by the Tibetan authorities, specimen of which could be made available to the Government of India for use of the check-posts."

107. Having said that they said Tibet had been an independent nation for the last 2000 years and was determined to remain so. Their intention was that copies (of their communiqué about developments in Tibet) should be circulated by them among all friendly countries, except communist countries, so that the "facts" could be published in the press and become widely known.

108. The communiqué also gave details of the Chinese perfidy in not adhering to the 17-point programme, and their attempt to destroy Tibetan culture and religion, gave details of the circumstances in which the Dalai Lama had to leave Lhasa and seek asylum in India. It also claimed that the seat of the independent Tibet had been shifted to Yu-Gyal-Lhuntse from March 26, 1959 and desired that the Government of India and all other governments of the world extend recognition to this new Government.

109. Meanwhile on April 8, the Dalai Lama had in his message to the Prime Minister brought to his notice the atrocious treatment that his advisors had received from the Chinese. He said:

"The Chinese Communist Government treats the Tibetan Government and people of Tibet with such power and force that I have some truth appeal which I can only apply to the Government of India. Therefore, I am coming down to New Delhi with few advisors and shall see your Excellency and Colleagues personally."

The Prime Minister however advised him that he should meet him in Mussoorie and advised him to proceed there, where he would meet him and talk about other matters.

110. New Delhi however advised the Dalai Lama to issue only a brief message “expressing relief on his arrival in India and not to make any detailed statement relating to the circumstances in which he left Lhasa”. The Political Officer Har Mander Singh was told “to put the suggestion in such a manner that he may not feel that we are trying to place any restraint on him”. He was also asked to ensure that the members of the DL’s entourage do not make their own individual statements about happenings in Tibet. The Prime Minister in his personal message to the Dalai Lama on April 13 reiterated his advice regarding issue of brief statement when he met the correspondents on arriving in the Tezpur where he would encounter a large number of journalists. He also reassured him he would talk to him about other matters about which he had spoken to the Political Officer in Mussoorie, where arrangements were being made for his stay.

111. The Senior Liaison Officer, PN Menon had two lengthy meetings with the DL on April 12 and another meeting with his Kashag (cabinet) the next day where he was requested to ask:

- i. GoI to check on the veracity of the stories of atrocities in Tibet by sending a fact-finding Commission to Tibet;
- ii. India should mediate and ask China to stop bloodshed and release the arrested persons;
- iii. India should espouse the cause of Tibetan independence, as it had been doing for other dependent countries.

During his meeting with the Dalai Lama, Menon repeated the earlier advice not to issue a lengthy statement when he met the journalists and instead issue a brief message, which Menon prepared for him. He sent the text to New Delhi for approval. Since his draft mentioned the developments after the Dalai Lama entered India, Foreign Secretary suggested in reply that he “has to say something about the circumstances in which he left Lhasa and clarify if he left Lhasa under duress. New Delhi however, prepared a draft for his statement and presented to him for his consideration as a statement to be issued, which he accepted.

112. The statement that he finally issued in Tezpur was a history of developments since the signing of the 17-point agreement in 1951 and

the circumstances in which he left Lhasa and clarified categorically that “he left Lhasa and Tibet and came to India of his own free will and not under duress.”

113. Ambassador Parathasarathy, from Peking informed New Delhi that Dalai Lama’s statement had made situation even more intricate for India. He said that “while it is true that Tibetan developments are straining our relations seriously our friendship is least as valuable to China as their’s to us.” He advised that “every effort should be made to preserve this friendship as it has world significance.”

114. On April 20, the Political Officer in Gangtok Apa Pant met the Dalai Lama in Siliguri, when his train passed through the town. Dalai recounted to him all that had happened all these years since the Chinese occupation. Pant said that he made it clear to him that India could not take sides in the current struggle of the Tibetans, and it was “impossible” for India to go to war over Tibet.

115. Prime Minister met the Dalai Lama in Mussoorie on April 24, when the latter gave detailed account of the happenings in Tibet and his efforts to work out a compromise with the Chinese for smooth running of the government. He said his efforts were thwarted by them. He admitted to the three letters he had written to the Chinese when he was prevented by the people to go for Chinese lunch engagement, but described them as “tactical move” to keep the doors open for a compromise if one was possible. When the Dalai Lama hinted for help from India in preserving religion and the way of life of the Tibetans, Prime Minister was quite categorical that India “cannot go to war with China or Tibet and even that would not help Tibet.” He assured him of “good deal of sympathy” for Tibet in India. When Dalai Lama said Tibetans expect the achieving of independence in the long run, Prime Minister said “the whole world cannot bring freedom to Tibet unless the whole fabric of the Chinese State is destroyed... To defeat is not easy. Only a world war, an atomic war can perhaps be the precursor of such possibility”. He advised him not to be under any illusion and “to fashion his policy with reference to actuality”.

116. Prime Minister speaking in the Lok Sabha on April 24 made it clear that Dalai Lama was entirely responsible for his statements. He was referring to “some irresponsible charges” made by Dalai Lama

referring to the speeches and statements made in China about India he said that he had been “greatly distressed at the tone of the comments and the charges made against India by responsible people in China.” He said it was a matter of the “deepest regret and surprise to us that charges should be made which are both unbecoming and entirely void of substance”.

117. Despite Prime Minister repeatedly dissuading the Dalai Lama expecting any punitive action against China, he persisted in making suggestions which put off the Prime Minister. On May 7, he suggested a four-point plan to rescue the Tibetans:

- i. China should stop its atrocities and free all detained people;
- ii. The Chinese military force to be withdrawn from Tibet;
- iii. A Committee representing neighbours of Tibet and some Buddhist countries along with some Tibetans to be sent to Tibet to find out the damage done to Tibetan icons, monasteries and Tibetan manuscripts; and.
- iv. To give medical assistance to wounded Tibetans and to prevent outbreak of epidemics Red Cross should be permitted to open a branch in Tibet.

118. Reacting to the Dalai Lama’s suggestions, an upset Prime Minister said that he had not fully appreciated the situation, since China to agree to the above suggestion would mean that it had been defeated in a war, had surrendered and terms can be dictated to it. He added “no government, least of all, the Chinese Government “can accept such terms or conditions”. He was asked to understand that while there was sympathy for the Tibetan people in many countries including Buddhist countries, none of them would be willing to take any action against China. He therefore advised that the best course was to “await the events and not take any further steps.” He was sure that “if any further step against China is taken, this will intensify China’s hostility and activities in Tibet and no country will be able to check her”.

119. Prime Minister had once again on August 7 reiterated to him how difficult it was to give effect to Dalai Lam’s wishes for some action in Tibet vis-à-vis the Chinese. He said “unfortunately it is not always

possible to give effect to our wishes and desires and circumstances beyond our control prove limiting factors.

120. Dalai Lama made a statement in Mussoorie in June 20, in which he claimed Tibet to be an independent sovereign country. While appealing for peace he insisted on certain condition precedent on negotiations for a peaceful settlement. He thanked the press for its help in the “struggle for survival and freedom”.

121. The Government of India dissociating itself from his statements said on June 30<sup>th</sup> that the Government of India was not responsible for any of his statements and that it expected him not to do anything which was contrary to international usage and embarrassing to the host country. Finally it said “the Government of India want to make it clear that they do not recognise any separate Government of Tibet, and there is, therefore, no question of a Tibetan Government under Dalai Lama functioning in India.”

122. Since then there has been many occasions when New Delhi had to reiterate this policy which has not changed and stood the test of time. India recognised his position as the religious and spiritual leader who had been given asylum on those grounds only.

123. Meanwhile the Chinese continued to blow hot and cold on the Dalai Lama and India’s grant of asylum to him. The Chinese Ambassador in New Delhi made a statement to Foreign Secretary on May 14, 1959 and said that Tibetan rebellion had brought about “deplorable abnormalities” in their relations and warned against obstructing China from exercising its full sovereignty in Tibet or making Tibet a semi-independent state or a sphere of influence of a foreign country or a “buffer zone”. He also accused New Delhi of interfering in China’s internal affairs and encouraging the Dalai Lama in his ambitions. After blowing hot and cold, the Ambassador waved an olive branch and said “on the whole, India is a friendly country of China and certainly will continue to be so in one thousand, ten thousand year to come”.

124. Replying to the Chinese Ambassador’s statement, the Foreign Secretary too made a statement, the draft of which was prepared by the Prime Minister. The statement while regretted Chinese use of discourteous language said that New Delhi had “no desire to enter into lengthy arguments about facts and opinion, insisted that Government

of India did “not consider or treat any other country as enemy country much it may differ from it”. Foreign Secretary’s statement reiterated that India had endeavoured to “cultivate the friendship of the Chinese people and Government in spite of differences of opinion.” Concluding, the Foreign Secretary said it was Government of India’s constant endeavour to develop friendly relations with all countries and try to remove tensions, bitterness and ill-will, while adhering to the policy they considered right. “In particular, they have endeavoured to cultivate the friendship of the Chinese people and Government, in spite of differences of opinion. They have avoided interference in China’s internal affairs, they will continue this policy but this must not be understood to mean that the Government of India will discard or vary any of their policies under any pressure from outside”, emphasised the Foreign Secretary.

125. In a circular telegram to certain Indian Missions abroad, it was reiterated that “while we have accepted Chinese suzerainty over Tibet and there is no question of our going back on it” it was also reiterated that “we cannot recognise any Tibetan Government in India nor would we permit them to carry on hostile propaganda against any friendly country”. Meanwhile, the Tibetans who followed the Dalai Lama in 1959 numbered a few thousands, have over the years multiplied into roughly a hundred thousand and rehabilitated in different settlements across India. To enable them to preserve their culture etc., separate schools are functioning in various Tibetan settlements with grants from the Government of India. The Dalai Lama continues to be recognised as a religious and spiritual leader of the Tibetans, and has been accepted as such by most countries of the world.

#### **IV**

#### **India-China Border**

126. As pointed out in the beginning, Chinese occupation of Tibet did not trouble the Prime Minister as far as India-Tibet border was concerned. His assessment was primarily based on the geographic and climatic conditions, which he thought had made the Tibetan barrier impenetrable. Another unsaid reason was the docile nature of the Tibetans, who were so overwhelmed by the peaceful nature of Buddhism, that resort to violence was not within their nature. But the

Chinese were a different people, who came to Tibet. They were battle hardened and nationalist to the core, despite being communist. It was for the first time in history that their occupation of Tibet made them contiguous neighbour of India.

127. At the very beginning of this note we have discussed the initial perceptions of the border in the historical perspective and what should be India's policy towards the new occupants of Tibet, in the changed circumstances. It impenetrability and buffer status had been challenged. Foreign Secretary too had agreed that the concept of buffer did not hold water any longer.

128. In June 1952 Chou En lai while talking to Panikkar had presumed that India had no intention of claiming "special rights" arising from unequal treaties of the past and was prepared to negotiate a new and permanent relationship safeguarding its legitimate interests. He talked about other matters concerning Tibet and also suggested converting the Indian Mission in Lhasa into a Consulate General. He did not raise the frontier question. A resume of the talks received after a month from the Chinese Foreign Office had a sentence in it, which did not cause any worry to either Nehru or Panikkar, but Bajpai, former Secretary General in the Ministry of External Affairs, now Governor of Bombay State, was duly concerned. The worrisome sentence in the resume read "He (Chou) felt existing situation of Sino-Indian relationship in Tibetan China was a scar left by Britain in course of their past aggression against China. For this Government of India was not responsible."

129. Nehru was intrigued that while Chou had talked about so many issues but failed to mention any thing about the frontiers. He told the Ambassador that:

"we are interested...not only in our direct frontier but also the frontiers of Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim and we have made it perfectly clear in Parliament that these frontiers must remain. There is perhaps some advantage in our not ourselves raising this issue. On the other hand I do not quite like Chou En lai's silence about it when discussing even minor matters."

Panikkar drew the attention of the worried Prime Minister to his own instructions against raising frontier question as it might give them an opening, and might indicate our own doubts. Nehru agreeing with the

Ambassador said “it would be desirable not to raise the question of our frontier at this stage.”

130. G.S. Bajpai drew the attention of his successor N. R. Pillai in the Ministry to the Chinese use of “scar” in their note and feared that it might be referring to the McMahon Line and “China may seek to heal or erase this “scar” on the basis of frontier rectification that would not be either to our liking or in our interest. He advised that this question should be handled “comprehensively and not piecemeal”.

131. New Delhi ignoring the reference to the “scar” reminded the ambassador that “we have all along in Parliament here publically proclaimed that there is no frontier question to be discussed with China and that the frontier has been finally demarcated along McMahon Line.” The Chinese did not raise any objection to our stand “or suggested any claim on this side of the McMahon Line”. Panikkar was advised that the Ministry had decided “not to raise this question with China. We take it for granted that the existing frontier line must continue.”

132. Meanwhile on August 2, India reminded the Weichiaopu of the seven points that needed discussion between the two countries— (1) The Mission in Lhasa, (2) Trade Agencies at Gyantse and Yatung, (3) Trade Agency at Gartok, (4) Trade at places other than trade marts, (5) Post and Telegraph offices on the trade route, (6) Military escort at Gyantse, and (7) Right of pilgrimage. Confirming to the Chinese the conversion of the Mission in Lhasa to the Consulate General, as the Chinese had suggested, India now offered to discuss all the above points at the appropriate time and whenever the Chinese were ready as not to leave any vacuum. But the Indian note chose to remain silent on the frontier question.

133. Panikkar while informing Bajpai of the above seven points that had been proposed for discussion told him that the Prime Minister had “finally decided that it was not necessary to raise this (frontier) issue”. Since Chinese had all this time did not raise the frontier question and it should be “presumed that they were not disputing the frontier as it existed.”

134. Bajpai was not convinced. Replying to Panikkar on August 7, 1952 he said “the Chinese never having accepted the McMahon Line as the frontier between Tibet and us can hardly regard this frontier



question as settled". He pointed out that the Chinese had "no intention of raising it until it suits their convenience". He opined that after India had raised the frontier question specifically and if then the Chinese did not react and kept quiet that would be the appropriate time to "quote this silence as acquiescence in support of our case". He pleaded that by raising the issue now, it would draw them in the open and India would know where it stood. Panikkar agreed that technically the position taken by Bajpai "might be correct, but surely they could not plead ignorance of the fact that our troops are in occupation of the line and that we treat the territory without protest from them as our own." Bajpai remained unconvinced and told the Ambassador that his opinion was that of a private citizen and he did not "presume to suggest that the decision which the Government of India have taken should be reopened".

135. The negotiations for the agreement on Tibet were due to take place in January 1954 in Peking. Panikkar, now Ambassador in Egypt, suggested to the Ministry three issues that would arise during discussions—(i) rights and privileges in Tibet, (ii) frontiers, and (iii) problem of Bhutan. On the first he did not expect too much of a problem; on the second he recommended that this should not be allowed to be opened for discussion and should there be pressure for discussion, India should be prepared to break off negotiations, since he felt the Chinese were not "in a position to force the issue". On the third point, he felt Indian position to be weak and the fact that Bhutan was guided by India in its foreign relations was 19<sup>th</sup> century concept which would not work now. Therefore he suggested that India should tell China that any attempt on their part to open diplomatic relations with Bhutan would be "considered by us an unfriendly act; and at the same time he stressed the need to advise the Maharaja of Bhutan against receiving any foreign mission.

136. In a strategy session in the Ministry on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1953 before the negotiations with the Chinese, the most important question discussed related to the frontiers particularly in view of the telegram from Lhasa that the Chinese having held the discussions with the Tibetans, were likely to raise the question of borders and firmly repudiate the 1914 Convention and therefore the McMahon Line.

137. After considering all the pros and cons of the issue, it was decided that India need not raise the frontier question at the forthcoming

talks. However, should the Chinese raise the issue, the consensus was “we should make it clear that there is nothing to discuss, as the frontier is clearly defined”. But India should be open to consider minor adjustments on the condition that the Chinese broadly agreed with the Indian position on the frontiers as then existing.

138. After good deal of discussions, two alternatives emerged: (i) should China not accept the Indian frontiers as existing, to break off the negotiations, with all the serious consequences and (ii) while insisting on our stand and refusing to accept the Chinese stand, proceed to other items and should the Chinese still insist on discussing the frontiers first, India should be prepared to break off the talks. However, of the two alternatives, the second was considered better.

139. Prime Minister agreeing with the above discussions generally, advised that “we should avoid walking out unless the Chinese insist on taking up this question” in which case the matter would be referred to India for final decision. Regarding Bhutan P.M. agreed that if it came up for discussion it should be made “perfectly clear that external affairs of Bhutan are under our direct guidance”.

140. The Chinese did not raise the question of frontiers at the negotiations for the new agreement on Tibet. The Indian delegation was happy that any controversy about the subject was avoided. The Prime Minister later in his minute of May 6, 1956 said that after the signing of the agreement on Tibet, India took it “for granted that all pending questions between India and China had been settled”.

141. New Delhi however, remained worried since the Chinese maps continued to show large chunks of Indian territory as Chinese. It had further reason to be concerned since it was found that even the Soviet Atlases routinely reproduced Chinese maps showing Indian territory as part of China. A Chinese note of July 17, 1954 about ‘intrusion by the Indian soldiers in the Wu Je’, (which India called Bara Hoti) so soon after the Agreement was signed, did not create too much of concern in New Delhi. Soon the number of petty border incidents particularly on the U.P.–China border increased. Chinese soldiers were seen across on the Indian side and even if there was no conflict yet, there was friction. Whenever the question of maps was raised with the Chinese, their standard response was that these were the reprints of the old

KMT maps. They kept India guessing how they proposed to correct their maps in future. China also did not concede that it accepted the boundary as reflected in Indian maps either or any revision of their maps would lead to automatic synchronisation with the Indian maps.

142. During the second visit of Chou En lai to India in 1956, Chou himself raised the question of Tibet and how it was part of China throughout in history. While doing so, to India's satisfaction, he clarified that 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." About Tibet of course, he left India in no doubt that it was part of China but never an administrative province of China and kept its autonomous character. He said "when we started negotiations for peaceful liberation of Tibet, we from the first recognised the autonomous character of the region". He, of course, pretended that he knew nothing about the McMahon Line until recently when China studied the border problem after Tibet's liberation. He added that now it was "an accomplished fact and we should accept it," but added that China had not yet consulted Tibet about it and he would now try and persuade and convince Tibetans to agree to accept it. Nehru assured Chou that "we are naturally interested in what happens in Tibet, as one of our near neighbours but we don't want to interfere."

143. Chou En lai also told Nehru of his visit to Pakistan and said that Pakistan raised the question of Kashmir in almost all meetings and he advised them to be peaceful and to have "direct talks with India and nothing more."

144. At a time when India and China were enjoying the bonhomie in their relations, Burma was having problems with China on account of, what the Burmese thought, China's interference in its internal affairs and the border problem. Nehru suggested to the Burmese Prime Minister U Nu, to visit Peking and sort out his problems with China. Nehru, in a show of his high standing with Chou En lai, in a letter of September 12, 1956 advised him to settle the differences with Burma in the interest of Asian solidarity. Chou En lai in reply appreciated the Prime Minister's friendly concern in the matter and said the dispute was inherited from history. In October Ambassador informed Delhi

that some tentative agreement had been reached between China and Burma as a result of talks between Chou En lai and U Nu. About the McMahon Line, the Burmese Foreign Minister told Ambassador R.K. Nehru that the Chinese regarded the McMahon Line as “immoral” but were eventually willing to recognise it as a *de facto* frontier. Finally by mutual give and take Burma and China signed a border treaty on October 1, 1960, while India-China differences on the border widened and escalated. In negotiating the treaty, the Burmese Prime Minister told his parliament that the tri-junction between Burma, China and India had been left undermined until the boundary between India and China was settled.

145. While Chinese maps were also showing Aksai Chin in Ladakh as Chinese territory in their maps, India did not raise that part of the frontier while claiming the McMahon Line in the eastern sector, until the Chinese announced the construction of a road in that area. It was not until 1958 that western sector figured in the talks on the frontiers.

146. In September 1957 Indian Ambassador in the United States G.L. Mehta had drawn attention of the Foreign Secretary Subimal Dutt to a report in the “Foreign Report” of July 18 about “China’s Expansionist Aims”. New Delhi told him not to worry as the Ministry was aware that the Chinese maps had been showing “parts of India, particularly a part of Kashmir and the whole of North East Frontier Agency within her borders”. He also added there were also intrusions in Bara Hoti, Shipkila and Spiti Valley, and that “the Chinese have agreed to settle these relatively minor disputes amicably by a joint survey and inspection on the spot”. He also told the Ambassador that there was no evidence that “Chinese authorities have been subverting the ethnic minorities in Himachal Pradesh”. Putting at rest all doubts of Mehta, Dutt told him that though the Mongoloid population of the border areas regard the “Dalai Lama as their spiritual head, there is little contact with Tibet (and that) one of our officers who visited the area in May 1957, found no traces of Chinese subversion”.

147. During 1955-59 several notes were exchanged between the two countries on the question of intrusion into the Wu Je/Bara Hoti area, Shipki La, Nilang, Spanggur, Khurnak Fort in Ladakh, Lohit Frontier Division, Khinzemane, Migyitun, etc. While these notes were being

exchanged, what really raised the Indian hackles was the reply received from China on the Indian note on a map in the magazine 'China Pictorial'. Replying to the Indian note, the Chinese mentioned the talks between Nehru and Chou in October 1954 and said it was "explained" to him (Nehru) that "the Chinese Government has not yet undertaken a survey of China's boundary, nor consulted with the countries concerned and that it will not make changes in the boundary on its own." It was at variance with the position taken by China in the past. It was India's expectations when the new maps would be printed, they would reflect the position of Sino-Indian boundary as depicted in the Indian maps. That hope was now belied.

148. Keeping in mind the position taken by China then and the ever escalating border incidents, Nehru decided to write to Chou En lai to convey his concerns to him. In his letter of December 1958, Nehru drew his attention to their earlier conversations and the assurances gave by Chou. Pointing out to the reply now received in respect of the "China Pictorial" map, he asked him to remove "any possibility of grave misunderstanding between our two countries", that the new Chinese position had created.

149. The reply of January 23, 1959 from Premier Chou came to Nehru as a big surprise. While conceding that the Chinese maps followed the old maps, he said they were a unilaterally drawn line which not only represented the fruits of British aggression but juridically was not even legal and China had never accepted it. Underlining the need for taking a "more or less realistic attitude towards McMahon Line" Chou insisted it needed "time to deal with this matter (and claimed) all this I had mentioned to you on more than one occasion". He too added that until recently he was not even aware of the existence of the McMahon Line. All this was contrary to what Nehru's understanding was!

150. Another reason for differences in the Indian and Chinese maps, Chou said, was due to the fact that the "boundary between the two countries (was) not yet formally delimited". He now insisted that the changes in Chinese maps could not be made without surveys and consulting the concerned countries, as otherwise it would bring "censure" on the government from the Chinese people. Using the opportunity he now questioned the depiction of boundary in the western

sector in the Indian maps, a question which was never raised in the past. He wrote:

“As a matter of fact, our people have also expressed surprise at the way the Sino-Indian boundary, particularly in the western section is drawn on maps published in India. They have asked our government to take up this matter with the Indian Government.”

Now the problem was no longer confined to the eastern sector. Henceforth the entire border from east to west had been thrown open.

151. Replying on March 22, 1959, Nehru conceded that the Sino-Indian boundary had not been demarcated on the ground in all the sectors, but expressed surprise at his claim that China had never accepted the eastern frontier and pointed out to him that while the frontier was traditional and followed the geographical principle of watershed on the crest of the High Himalayan range, the frontiers generally had the sanction of specific international agreements between the two countries in most parts like, the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1895 in the case of Sikkim, the 1942 treaty for the western sector and Simla Convention for the eastern sector.

152. In the meantime, the relations suffered another setback as China accused India of permitting the Tibetans living in India to indulge in anti-Chinese activities ‘using Kalimpoing as the base’ and allowing the Americans and the Nationalist Chinese reactionaries to carry out anti-Chinese activities from the Indian soil. The asylum given to Dalai Lama and other Tibetans was also galling to the Chinese. The frequency of exchange of notes on the frontier intrusions now increased exponentially.

153. The Chinese conceded that asylum to the Dalai Lama’s had created “deplorable abnormalities in the relations between India and China” for which the Chinese held the Government of India responsible. These developments were *pari passu* with increased differences on the frontier question.

154. On September 10, 1959 India once again reiterated to China that the McMahon Line definitely represented the boundary between India and Tibet Region of China “from the eastern border of Bhutan up to Burma” and that India stood “firmly by it”. It also disputed that Longju (Bara Hoti) was Chinese territory.

155. To shore up Chou En lai's position, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress adopted a resolution on September 13, 1959 unanimously endorsing Premier Chou En lai's Report on the Sino-Indian boundary question and "fully approved the stand, attitude and policy adopted by the Government in dealing with the Sino-Indian boundary question". It expressed its "regrets on the recent series of incursions by the Indian troops into the Chinese territory and the anti-Chinese campaign whipped up by the right wing politicians in India and expressed the hope that the Indian side will swiftly withdraw from the places into which it has intruded and stop the anti-Chinese agitations and start friendly negotiations with China for a peaceful settlement of the boundary question."

156. In the midst of all these exchanges, on October 22, 1959 occurred the most unfortunate Kongka pass incident in the western sector in which nine Indian policemen were killed and 10 taken into custody by the Chinese. While India insisted that the incident took place on the Indian territory and provided unimpeachable evidence for its claim, China, however claimed the area to be theirs.

157. An Indian note of 4 November 1959 said that it stood for peaceful methods to resolve all disputes, but "where aggression takes place, the people of India inevitably have to resist by all means available to them." India also asked for the release of the detained persons and return of the bodies of the killed personnel.

158. The incident received wide spread publicity in India and the public opinion which hitherto had been fed on the myth of the *Hindi-Chinni Bhai Bhai* was outraged to no end and Prime Minister Nehru came under attack both in parliament and in public for keeping them in the dark about the true nature of the India-China relationship.

159. On September 8, 1959, just before the Kongka pass incident Chinese Premier replied to the Indian Prime Minister's letter of March 23. He again disowned the McMahon Line since it was negotiated on the back of China, secretly and also the 1842 treaty about the western sector as negotiated without the Chinese participation. He refused to accept the Indian *locus standi* as far as the boundary between China and Bhutan was concerned. Replying in a lengthy letter Chou said that while not accepting the McMahon Line, China had "never crossed this line". Replying within two weeks, Prime Minister Nehru's letter was even

lengthier than Chou's and gave a detailed background to the Indian claim lines in all the sectors, while conceding once again that "the Sino-Indian boundary had not been delimited along its entire length". He disputed Chou's claim that treaty regarding Ladakh was signed without Chinese participation. The treaty was signed both by the representatives of the Dalai Lama and the Chinese Emperor. He also provided additional facts to prove Chinese acceptance of the 1942 treaty. Similarly India sought to demolish the Chinese argument regarding the McMahon Line and provided evidence for the Indian claims in the central sector. Nehru also pointed out to Chou that China's claim that the Sino-Indian boundary was about 2000 kilometres in length was underestimate of the length which was 3520 kilometres. Prime Minister agreed that until a settlement was made, the *status quo* be maintained along the boundary by respecting the traditional frontiers.

160. Meanwhile the Prime Minister on September 13, 1959 issued certain instructions on the borders for the defence forces to follow. He said that our forces and others should keep certainly within our side of the frontier *i.e.* the McMahon Line or elsewhere. If they happen to be on the other side, they should withdraw beyond that. He ordered that our civil and military officers must avoid actual conflict unless it is practically forced upon them. He also said that in the Ladakh area, for the present we have to put up with the Chinese occupation of this sector.

161. While the correspondence was being exchanged between the two prime ministers, there was further exchange of notes on border intrusions. Now there were accusations on the violation in the air and on the sea. Problems of other types too cropped up in their relations like, the contents of the embassy bulletins, articles and commentaries in the official media, misuse of diplomatic courtesies, problems of pilgrims, functioning of Indian trade agencies in Tibet, citizenship problems of Kashmiri Muslims settled in Tibet much before the India-China Agreement of 1954, etc.

162. Responding to Prime Minister Nehru's letter of 26<sup>th</sup> September, Chou En lai on November 7, while welcoming that the *status quo* be maintained along the frontiers between the two countries, proposed a 20-km withdrawal from the McMahon Line in the East and "from the line up to which each side exercises actual control in the west". Finally he proposed that the two prime ministers hold talks to discuss further the



boundary and other related questions. Making some counter proposal, Nehru in his letter of November 16 agreed on some interim efforts to prevent the situation getting worse and for a meeting between the two prime ministers at a place and time convenient to both, which was finally settled for April 1960 in New Delhi,

163. A Chinese note delivered before the talks, on April 3 gave some indication of the position that the Chinese were likely to take at the talks. It may be summed up as under:

- i. no treaty or agreement exists which formally delimiting the Sino-Indian boundary;
- ii. It rejected the principle of watershed, and laid stress on exercise of jurisdiction or sovereignty as the determining principles;’ and
- iii. a compromise on the basis of give and take for a settlement.

164. A telegram from Ambassador Parathasarthi of 31<sup>st</sup> March conveyed to the Prime Minister that the Chinese officials were expressing optimism regarding the outcome at the talks. He quoted a Director from the Chinese Foreign Ministry to have conveyed that “we mean to settle at the forthcoming meeting. You will be surprised by the result that will flow from it”. He felt while it was difficult to assess the significance of these reports, it could be that the Chinese wish to impress everyone particularly the Afro-Asians that their approach will be extremely reasonable and positive and if the talks fail, it will not be their fault.” His own recommendation to the Prime Minister was:

“we should stand resolutely firm to be drawn into negotiations on the issue of delimitation of the entire boundary or even accepting proposals for Joint Committee to consider the issue. If we find the Chinese show no basic change in attitude or make concessions which are only partially satisfactory, we should tell them that we wish to take time to consider the matter and could meet later. In the light of our discussions with the Chinese we could assess the situation on merits and determine policy accordingly.”

165. The Burmese Prime Minister U Nu a week before the summit met Nehru in Varanasi, and told him that it appeared to him the Chinese were earnest in settling the matter with India on the boundary question, but he was told by the Chinese that it was “difficult for China to make

a move because of India's attitude towards China and their advocating that China should vacate large areas of territory before any negotiations could take place". U Nu of course told Nehru that Chinese were friendly to Burma and he had succeeded in getting a "good settlement with them".

166. The Chinese Premier spent six days in Delhi from 20<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> April and had almost 20 hours of talks with the Prime Minister spread over seven sessions. He also met Vice President, Home and Finance Ministers besides meeting the former Ambassador R.K. Nehru. The Railway Minister Sardar Swaran Singh had two rounds of talks with Foreign Minister Chen Yi. There were also talks among the officials of the two sides on specific issues referred to them.

167. The Joint communiqué issued on April 25 reflected the lack of agreement on basic issues between the two prime ministers. They only agreed on the meeting of officials of the two countries to "examine, check and study all historical documents, records, accounts, maps and other material relevant to the boundary question, on which each side relied in support of its stand, and draw up report for submission to the two governments. The report would list the points on which there was agreement and the points on which there was disagreement or which should be examined more fully and clarified."

168. The press conference that Chou En lai addressed that night before leaving for Kathmandu, gave out the points of differences which held up the talks. He pointed to the different perceptions of the boundary both by India and China in the eastern and western sectors. He however insisted that China which had never accepted the McMahon Line but was "willing to maintain present state of that sector of the boundary" and China would "not cross that line." Chou maintained that in view of China not putting forward any claim in the eastern sector the dispute had become "a smaller one (because of) the talks between the two prime ministers in the last few days."

169. Regarding the western sector, he said the Indian maps had been changing in the last few years, whereas "the alignment which appears on the Chinese maps has historical basis and historical foundations". He said that he had requested the Indian Prime Minister "to take an attitude towards this sector of boundary similar to the attitude which

the Chinese Government has taken towards the Eastern sector of the boundary", which meant swapping eastern sector with the western sector. Since India had not agreed to the Chinese suggestion in the western sector "therefore there is this bigger dispute with regard to the western sector of the boundary."

170. In the central sector he said the disputes were confined to few places and were of a minor nature. With regard to Sikkim and Bhutan he said "China has no boundary disputes" and "China respects the relations between India and Sikkim and Bhutan."

171. Chou En lai also had problem with the Dalai Lama in India, which he insisted was indulging in activities which "far exceeded the limits which the Indian Government had promised the Chinese Government".

172. Prime Minister commenting on Chou's press conference told the parliament next day that he agreed that there existed disputes on the boundary between the two countries. But he did not agree with all what Chou had said. He said an "attempt was made to equate the eastern sector with the western sector". He conceded that in the eastern sector "we had nevertheless advanced gradually, in the course of the last few years, last six or seven or eight or ten years, to the present boundary line which we call McMahon Line. They equated it to the western sector, although the conditions are quite different and the facts are quite different." He said "we were unable to convince each other and we—both parties—remained unconvinced at the end of it."

173. Chou En lai commenting on Nehru's statement next day said in Kathmandu that while his statement was friendly to India, Nehru's statement "was not so friendly towards China".

174. In briefing the Indian Missions abroad, the Foreign Secretary's telegram of 27<sup>th</sup> April summarised the Chinese point of view on the dispute, and added that India "disagreed with the Chinese stand on every single point". It added that China insisted on India accepting their claim on western sector as a price for the McMahon Line. The Foreign Secretary said while the officials' report hold the prospects of another meeting between the two prime ministers "it would, however, be entirely incorrect to give the impression, that each side appreciates the other's point of view better or that prospects of reasonable settlement is even

remotely in sight. The Chinese might try to give contrary impression to the world.”

175. An editorial in the *People's Daily* of April 27, 1959 regretted that the “expected talks did not end in agreement” but pointed out the “positive bearing on the maintenance of tranquillity on the border”.

176. Failure of the talks to clinch the issue marked the breaking point between the two countries. The officials appointed to fulfil the mandate of the Summit failed to come to a common stand on the border issues and submitted separate reports which highlighted differences than consensus on the borders. The acrimony between the two sides in coming days and months increased until the flash point was reached in October-November 1962. The positions of the two hardened further. The efforts of the Colombo Powers to intercede and help them to resolve their differences failed. Now there was greater exchange of polemics and arguments. The Chinese did not desist from use of vituperative language which New Delhi found “offensive and unbecoming and which was against normal international practice and usage”. When the use of derogatory language in the Chinese notes exceeded the limits of diplomatic niceties, the Ministry of External Affairs was constrained to return the Chinese notes on several occasions. While returning one of its notes on October 7, 1967 India said the language of its note was “quite unfamiliar to international diplomacy”. It was pointed out to the Chinese Embassy that its note had “transgressed the norms of diplomatic practice” and was not only couched in undiplomatic language but has even used invectives to make patently false and slanderous allegations”. Another similar note addressed in undiplomatic language was returned on November 24, 1967.

177. The relations between the two countries remained frozen for quite some time until the visit of Foreign Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to Peking in February 1979. The thrust in the Chinese leaders' talk was the same as proposed by Chou En lai in April 1960 that China would accept the McMahon Line in the east if India accepted the Chinese occupation of Aksai Chin in the western sector, where it had constructed a road. There was however an additional suggestion that if the border problem could not be solved now, it should be put aside for the future and normal relations in other fields could start. The relations in other

fields would promote and enhance mutual understanding and friendly cooperation so as to create a favourable atmosphere which would help in the solution of the border problem in due course, argued the Chinese.

178. Chinese told Vajpayee that the eastern sector was of great economic value in return for India accepting the Chinese position in the western sector, where there were barren hills with little of economic value. Vajpayee in his discussions with Vice Premier Deng Xiao Ping suggested that “if there was a restoration of the *status quo* as of 1959 on the border, it would go a long way to clear the dust and bring about a good atmosphere for a discussion on the question”. In any case Vajpayee did not reject the Chinese offer. It needed clearance from Government of India before he could react to it. Further discussions were to take place at the time of the return visit of the Chinese Foreign Minister in the following year. Reporting to Parliament on his visit, Vajpayee made no pretension that his visit was meant to resolve the differences on the border and nor were the Chinese expecting it but it was nevertheless “an opportunity for the first time in 19 years to have a frank exchange of views on this complex and politically vital issue”.

179. In the meantime the Government in which Vajpayee was the Foreign Minister resigned in July, 1979 and if there was any hope of follow up action, it vanished. This however, for quite some time remained the template for an interim solution of the borders as far as the Chinese were concerned. It was repeated in July 1980 by Deng Xiao Ping in an interview to a defence journal ‘Vikrant’. But Indian response was not so positive. The new External Affairs Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao in his statement in the Lok Sabha on July 2, 1980 welcomed Deng’s proposal regarding the eastern sector as “somewhat more precise” and therefore acceptable but he remained silent on the western sector. On the contrary he said “It may be that ways other than the package solution suggested by the Chinese Government could prove more effective”. Unfortunately no alternative or more effective plan than the one then suggested has offered itself since then. One possible reason for India not accepting the swap presumably was that what Nehru had rejected in 1960, his daughter could not bring herself to accept it now. Perhaps another prime minister could have reacted differently.

180. The Chinese proposal was a package deal and had to be accepted

as such. Within days of Rao's statement, India's recognition of the Soviet backed Heng Samrin regime in Kampuchea vitiated the atmosphere. A *People's Daily* commentary on July 9 described the Indian action as "perverse" and "inglorious". Peking "postponed" the return visit of Chinese Foreign Minister to New Delhi in retaliation of the recognition. Possibly the proposal that the Chinese had made to Vajpayee the previous year would have come up for follow up discussion to take it forward.

181. After having made the proposal for a package deal, for inexplicable reasons in 1985 the Chinese changed the goal post for resolution of the border question. They were no longer prepared to resolve the border question on the basis of *quid pro quo*. China now laid claim on Tawang in the eastern sector, which meant the whole of North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), since converted into a full State of the Union on February 20, 1987 as the 29<sup>th</sup> State with a population of 1.38 million.

182. When Rajiv Gandhi visited Peking in 1988, China's terms for border settlement were already known to the Government of India. Even the 1980 proposal was no longer on the table. Hence it was clear that no settlement of the border appeared possible. Taking advantage of this known Chinese position, he went well prepared for a stand that he could possibly take. Under the Indian Constitution the Government can neither cede nor acquire any territory without the amendment of the Constitution. It was therefore easier for him to agree to the other option of setting aside the border issue to a future date, and start relations in other fields. And so it happened. Since then while the border question has been allowed to hibernate, relations in other fields since started have shown remarkable results. The bilateral trade has developed many fold touching a level of more than US\$ 70 billion. That the balance of trade is heavily in favour of China is another story. Relations in diverse fields have progressed too, such as culture, media, science and technology, climate change etc. There have been occasional hiccups on the border, which got resolved by the use of one of the several mechanisms that have since been put in place.

183. This change in China's position on the borders has not been made officially public by either party while it was generally well understood. For the first time China went public on its terms in the interview of

Dai Bingguo, published in the Peking based magazine “India-China Dialogue” January 2017 issue. He was China’s Special Representative for border consultations with his Indian counterparts from 2003 and 2013. There were 15 rounds of talks during these years, and another three rounds have taken place since then. What he said could be easily understood to be the official Chinese position.

184. China’s argument for staking claim to Tawang or Southern Tibet as the Chinese call it, rests on two pillars—(i) India now controls the majority of the disputed territory and (ii) it was an “inalienable from China’s Tibet in terms of cultural background and administrative jurisdiction”. This he claimed would “correct the wrong done by the colonialists and restore fairness and justice”. He said after 30 years of negotiations the two countries were “standing in front of the gate towards a final settlement” and insisted that “Indian side holds the key to the gate.” Calling for making “meaningful and mutually acceptable adjustment to their respective positions” he recognised it was “no small task for either party and both must make painful decisions and address each other’s demands”. He however, remained silent on what sacrifice China would make to clinch the issue. Asking India to sacrifice “South Tibet” China has put a stiffer price for settlement than what it had asked for in April 1960, or 1978 or 1980. In so doing the Chinese have made the solution of a difficult problem almost impossible. If India had accepted the offer of Chou En lai for a package deal in 1960, a settlement was a distinct possibility. Once the aggression took place in 1962 and in the heat of the moment Indian Parliament had on November 14, 1962 unanimously adopted a Resolution affirming “the firm resolve of the Indian people to drive out the aggressor from the sacred soil of India, however long the struggle may be” a settlement has become impossible.

185. Any settlement, as and when it comes, would willy-nilly have to be a compromise between the two positions, in which case India, particularly has a more difficult task at hand. It would need to rescind the above resolution of the parliament and amend the constitution too for which a national consensus is must.



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