

SPOTLIGHT ON SINO-INDIAN FRONTIERS

Karunakar Gupta

NEW BOOK CENTRE

14, Ramanath Majumder Street
Calcutta-700009

Spotlight on Sino-Indian Frontiers : by Karunakar Gupta

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Dedicated to my Departed Gurus in England
Sir John Pratt, Guy Wint, G. F. Hudson
Prof. C. A. W. Manning & Prof. Martin Wight

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“History is the most dangerous product evolved from the Chemistry of the intellect. Its properties are well-known. It causes dreams, it intoxicates whole people, gives them false memories, quickens their reflexes, keeps their old wounds open, torments them in their repose, leads them into delusions, either of grandeur or persecution, and makes nations bitter, arrogant, insufferable and vain”.

Paul Valery : HISTORY & POLITICS, 1931

PREFACE

The collection of papers in this volume is the product of more than two decades of research to understand the intricacies of the Sino-Indian border conflict, which has adversely affected Indian foreign policy as well as economic development for far too long. During the period between 1950 and 1959, India's status in world politics was an object of envy to many well-established Powers. During the bipolar age of world politics, she was regarded as the leader of the Arab-Asian nations in the U.N. and accepted as the main peace-broker in the East-West conflict, even though her position remained insignificant in terms of military power. Nehru's foreign policy in those days was firmly based on the principle of amity with the People's Republic of China, another emergent Asian Power representing a quarter of mankind, with whom India shared a sprawling frontier along the Himalayas and the Karakoram mountains. As a result, India's defence expenditure could be kept at a minimum despite the danger posed by Pakistan. In 1959, India's defence budget amounted to about Rs. 300 crores.* Since then it has been increasing by leaps and bounds from year to year. In 1982-83, the defence budget allocation exceeds Rs. 5000 crores. This represents a seventeen times increase in the defence burden, in monetary terms. Even this has not improved our security, despite close defence co-operation with the Soviet Union, and the break-up of Pakistan into two separate states in 1971. The enormous rise in the defence budget has been a major cause of the runaway inflation prevailing in India to-day, through the diversion of real resources in piling up sophisticated military hardware in lieu of scarce foreign exchange. More than 50 percent of our people still live below the poverty line and about 65 percent people are denied the light of primary education ; all our planning efforts remain a sheer gamble in rains. Conflicts with our neighbours, particularly the military confrontation with China since 1962, have been an important factor affecting the healthy development of the Indian economy.

* Crore=10 million

In this context, the zigzag course of the development of the U.S.A.-P.R.C. relations during the past three decades might be illustrative. The U. S. A., as is wellknown, sought to contain the P. R. C., fought a devastating war in Korea for three years, from June 1950 to July 1953, and pursued relentless policies to isolate China in the international community for many years. Even then, eventually the U. S. A. found it necessary to seek a rapprochement with Beijing. Under the influence of his brilliant security adviser Henry Kissinger, President Nixon, one-time China-baiter, sought in 1971 an invitation to visit Beijing and went there in the spring of 1972 to establish rapport with the leaders of the P. R. C.

According to the late Sardar K. M. Panikkar, who had been the principal adviser to Nehru on China policy, a powerful American lobby had been operating in India through many overt and covert agencies since 1950, and they were largely instrumental in misleading the Indian Press, Parliament, the bureaucracy and the public by magnifying the minor differences in the original notions about the boundary between New Delhi and Beijing.¹

They were able to create a psychosis of fear among the ill-informed Indian public about China's allegedly grand designs against India, particularly in the context of the Tibetan uprising in March 1959 and the subsequent flight of the Dalai Lama to India. The Taiwan and Tibetan lobbies, based in India since 1950, also assiduously worked with the similar object of rousing anti-Chinese hysteria among the Indian public.

Nehru himself was conscious that foreign lobbies, particularly those of the Great Powers, the U.S.A., U.K., as well as the U.S.S.R., were all anxious to add to unfriendliness between India and China, because the two countries at peace with each other, would make a vast difference to the whole set-up and power balance.

1. Zhou En-lai had privately intimated to Nehru during his visit to New Delhi in the winter of 1956-57 that he proposed to accept the so-called McMahon Line in view of friendly relations with India and Burma despite its shady origins, after due consultation with the Tibetan Government. Nehru, on his part, openly declared several times in August-September 1959 that there had been no proper survey nor any international agreement about Aksai Chin, and that this area was open to debate.

Nehru expressed these intimate thoughts to Sardar Patel in his confidential note of 18 November, 1950.¹ Nehru also warned his Western-oriented envoy in the U. N., Sir B. N. Rau, about these under-currents of world politics during the Korean crisis.²

About the validity of their respective border claims, the Indian and Chinese officials produced in 1961 *Report of the Officials of the Governments of India and the People's Republic of China on the Boundary Question*. The Chinese side submitted 245 items of evidence in their favour, while the Indian officials replied with 630 items. But neither the Indians nor the Chinese could provide any fool-proof argument in their favour. An analysis of the documents in the India Office Records in London in 1969-70 in this respect revealed that the Indian claim to the McMahon Line boundary in the North-east was not based on any legally valid treaty. More than that, these Records showed that the Indo-Tibetan boundary was not a subject of the functions of the Tripartite Simla Conference of 1913-14, which was called to fix the Sino-Tibetan boundary only. In the Western sector, the boundary remained undefined till the last days of the British Raj.³

Professor H. K. Barapujari, the well-known historian of Assam, wrote in his recently published book based on official documents, "Until 1947, the McMahon Line was not 'the firm frontier, firm by Treaty (and) firm by usage' though it forms the natural division between the two countries, India and China." (*Problem of the Hill Tribes: North-East Frontier, Vol. III, Page 329*). He also quoted with approval the following remarks of H.A.F. Rumbold, an official of the India Office, "I found nothing in the India Office Records to justify the line on the Kuenlun range indicated on some maps and the (Simon) Commission Map accordingly adopted a line roughly along the crest of the Karakoram ranges." (*Ibid, page 331*).

1. Vide Appendix : pp. 169-175.

2. B. Shiva Rao's article on "Nehru and the U. N. During the Korean Crisis", *The Statesman*, 7 December, 1965.

3. Dr. Subramaniam Swamy, M. P., who did his own research on the historical records also came to the following conclusion :
 "The Sino-Indian border does not exist. The McMahon Line has no legal basis. The arguments of the border alignment in Aksai Chin are even weaker. Neither the Indians nor the Chinese have an uncontested case on the border." *Sunday*, 28 March-3 April, 1982.

The question arises why to-day, in spite of the discovery of the historical facts, India and China cannot make up their border dispute on a pragmatic basis and usher an era of co-operative co-existence, which will lighten their heavy arms burden and stimulate their economic development. While the Chinese leaders from Zhou En-lai (1960) to Deng Xiaoping (1981) expressed their desire for a border settlement on the basis of existing actualities, (which ensured India's claim to the McMahon Line), the Indian official negotiators generally stuck to some categorical claims, particularly in the Western sector, which are not warranted either by history or geography or international law. This is at least partly a result of the deliberate distortion of records by some key officials of the Historical Division in the Ministry of External Affairs since November 1959, which poisoned the public mind, presenting China as a vicious dragon grabbing the 'sacred soil' of India. Matters were made worse by denying the independent historians any opportunity to look into the official papers relating to the Simla Conference (1913-14), and also the official documents relating to Nehru's China policy (1947-1952) which are more than 30 years old.

In 1966, the British Government decided to throw open to scholars all official documents after the lapse of 30 years, while the U.S. Government releases official documents after the lapse of 25 years. Professor James MacGregor Burns, ex-President, American Political Science Association, wrote a remarkable article in the *New York Times Book Review*, (November 8, 1970) entitled *The Historian's Right To See* before the Freedom Of Information Act was amended by the U.S. Congress in 1976 liberalising the process of release of official papers of recent origin to the public. He wrote: "The immediate issue is the scholar's right of access, but the basic issue is public's right to gain reliable information about what its officials have been saying and doing in making the vital decisions of the post-war years." Professor Burns concluded his closely argued essay by asserting, "The need for withholding classified records after a span of a few years is largely a myth.

"The need for scholars to see and for the public to know is, in a great democracy, urgent and compelling."

The Indian people take pride in their democracy, but the Government of India has not released all official documents dealing

with India's relations with the People's Republic of China and the border dispute. In 1950, they released to the press contemporary confidential documents such as the exchange of official letters between August 1950 and November 1950 on the controversy over Tibet. Also, the Government of India published from September 1959 onwards fourteen volumes of White Papers, which contained mostly recent exchange of official notes between India and China on various aspects of the border problem covering the period July 1954 to March 1968. On the other hand, the Government of India withheld from public view the despatches of the late Sardar K. M. Panikkar, our first Ambassador in Beijing, who was said to have been Nehru's principal adviser on China policy in the formative years of the Indian Republic which coincided with such important events as the revolution in China, the outbreak of the Korean War, the march of the Chinese Army into Tibet, the signing of the Japanese Peace Treaty etc. Mr. T. N. Kaul, I.C.S. (Retd.), one of the most experienced diplomats still active to-day, wrote in his memoirs how in the early fifties he began "to entertain admiration and respect for Panikkar after reading some of his brilliant despatches in the Foreign Office". (*Diplomacy In Peace And War*, page 28). But these papers still remain a closed book to scholars.

Long ago, Professor Harold Laski laid down that honest and straightforward supply of news is an essential requirement of democracy. It has been my basic contention since 1970 after going through the India Office Records for the period 1914 to 1940 that the long continuing confrontation between India and China over the border issue has been, to a large extent, due to the dissemination of wrong information among the Indian public through official historians, having exclusive access to documents. It is time Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who since 1976 has been, seriously exploring the possibility of mending our fences with China, helped us to rediscover from the official records the original Nehru legacy about our China policy, when the late Prime Minister relied on the expert advice of Sardar Panikkar and Krishna Menon in preference to the Western-oriented officials.

I take this opportunity to convey my sense of gratitude to my friends and well-wishers in England whose patronage helped me see my way through my scholarly pursuit during my five visits

to England in 1952-55, 1961-62, 1969-70, 1977-78 and 1978-79. I would particularly mention Dr. Alastair Lamb, Mrs. Venice Lamb, Mr. Neville Maxwell, Dr. John Gittings, Mr. and Mrs. Derek Bryan, Lord Humphrey Trevelyan, Sir John Addis, Mr. David Wilson, Dr. Peter Lyon, Major Ian Jones, Mr. Martin Moir (India Office Records), Miss Susan Boyd, Librarian, Press Clippings Library, Royal Institute of International Affairs. I must also convey my hearty thanks to Professor Liu Dan Ian and his senior colleagues in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences who organised for me a lecture tour in China in May-June, 1980. This gave me an opportunity to exchange views on the problems of the Sino-Indian frontier with the Chinese academicians in Peking, Nanking, Hangzhou, Shanghai and Canton.

I am grateful to the authorities of the Netaji Institute for Asian Studies, Calcutta, for offering me a Fellowship in International Relations on my retirement from the Muralidhar Girls College so that I may carry on further research in my field of specialisation. I am particularly beholden to Dr. M. M. Chakraborty, Vice-Chancellor, Jadavpur University, for the kind interest he has taken in my career. I also acknowledge my debt to Mr. Supreo Bonnerjee for his continuing academic patronage during the last two decades.

Mr. Sourin Ray, a doyen among Indian archivists with encyclopaedic knowledge of the records of the National Archives of India, New Delhi, put me in profound debt by agreeing to write an introduction to this collection of essays.

For preparation of the index of this book, I am grateful to Mrs. Susmita Dutta.

In conclusion, I owe a word of apology that since these essays were written throughout the sixties and seventies, at different times, I could not avoid repetition of certain facts. But considering the highly controversial nature of the subject and for the sake of truthful documentation of intermingled historical events, I crave indulgence of the learned readers.

Calcutta, the 7th December, 1982

Karunakar Gupta

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Karunakar Gupta has already made his name as a most effective, if somewhat uncompromising, critic of the official handling of the Sino-Indian Frontier problem, and not undeservedly. In a series of learned articles,* all results of years of painstaking research among diverse sources of information, he has convincingly shown that not only the manner in which the problem has been dealt with was clumsy, amateurish and slipshod, but also the very basis on which the whole official attitude to it came to be formed was, to say the least, extremely shaky. He has established that in approaching the problem, India's policy-framers have largely been guided not so much by facts as by myths, some of which were their own invention, and others an awkward legacy from the past. And in their endeavour to endow these myths with an appearance of plausibility they have often gone to lengths which would on any showing be regarded as preposterous. They have misread records or have otherwise twisted their meaning. They have taken passages, out of context from authentic documents, whenever it suited their purpose and have felt no qualms in cooking up evidence where none was forthcoming. And in order to keep the public ignorant of the facts about the problems they have placed a ban on access to the very sources of information (*i.e.* the official records of the British Raj) which alone could have made the curious wise. The full

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- * 1. The Hidden History of the Sino-Indian Frontier (*E & P. Weekly, May, 1974*).
 2. The Origin And Significance of the Sino-Indian Agreement on Tibetan Trade And Pilgrimage (*E & P. Weekly, April, 1978*).
 3. A Legacy of the British Raj. (*The Statesman, 28 October, 1978*).
 4. Myths about A Frontier Dispute, (*The Statesman, 21 December, 1978*).
 5. The McMahon line. (*The China Quarterly, July-September, 1971*).
 6. Distortions in the History of the Sino-Indian Frontier (*E & P. Weekly, 26 July, 1980*).

story of the amazing transactions may be best read in Dr. Gupta's articles referred to above. I will here confine myself merely to some of Dr. Gupta's major findings on the frontier question itself.

To take first the question of India's North Eastern Frontier, Dr. Gupta has very convincingly argued that in all official maps prior to 1936, this frontier was consistently shown as being marked by the Assam foothills. The present official stand taken against this is that the frontier has all along been defined by a line which runs along the crest of the Assam-Himalayas and that it derived its legal validity from a Tripartite Convention arrived at between Great Britain, Tibet and China as a result of a conference held by the parties concerned at Simla in 1913-14. What makes the claim rather dubious is that the text of the Convention itself, as published in the 1938 reprint of *Aitchison's Treaties, Engagements and Sanads (Vol. XIV)*, does not indicate even remotely that fixing such a boundary was one of its objects. True, there appears in the same Volume a Note from the British Plenipotentiary McMahon in which he proposed confidentially to the Tibetan representative precisely such a boundary line, and also the latter's reply conveying his acceptance of it. But these Notes formed no part of the conference proceedings, the Convention does not even refer to them. Thus whatever may be the *validity* of the line, it does not derive from the Convention itself. The only official document which does speak of the Convention, including a definition of the boundary on the Indo-Tibetan Frontier happens to be a narrative of the Simla conference as given in the volume referred to above. But the narrative also clearly states that 'the Chinese Government...refused to ratify the agreement', and this by itself would render it invalid. The narrative, of course, claims that the Convention was later 'ratified by Great Britain and Tibet by means of a declaration accepting its terms as binding between themselves'. But for one thing no such declaration exists. Moreover, any such declaration, whatever its possible value, *would have most certainly* comes under the mischief of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, which debarred Great Britain from entering into any negotiation with Tibet except through the intermediary of the Chinese Government. What thus the narrative has to say about the vali-

dity of the line proposed by McMahon has no basis in fact. However, the line was not only not ratified by the British Authorities in London and New Delhi but also, as Dr. Gupta has established, was repudiated by Lord Hardinge's Government, who in their despatch to the Secretary of State (dated 23rd July, 1914), stated unequivocally that the consideration of North-East Frontier of India did not form part of the functions of the Simla Conference. Even a more revealing passage in the same despatch, which Dr. Gupta has omitted to mention, was that what McMahon had done with regard to fixing the North-East Frontier was personal to him and that the Government was not bound by it. By bringing to light this very crucial document, Dr. Gupta has, at one blow, knocked the bottom out of all the verbiage that has been officially piled up to bolster up the validity of the McMahon line.

There remains the question of how an entirely misleading account of the Simla Conference and its aftermath could find its entry into a seemingly authentic official compilation as *Aitchison's Treaties (Volume XIV)*. The correct answer to it would perhaps have remained beyond our reach, but for Dr. Gupta who made an all-out endeavour to ransack the archives of the External Department of the India Office and to coax them in to reveal the truth. The story that those records unfold is, in brief, as follows.

In 1935 the Foreign and Political Department suddenly woke up to the very urgent imperialist need for pushing up India's North-Eastern Frontier from Assam foothills, along which it lay at that time, to the crest of the Himalayas. Although a valid excuse for pursuing this aim was still lacking, Olaf Caroe, the then Deputy Secretary of the Department, found no difficulty in inventing one, and pressing into service for this purpose the abortive Simla Convention as well as the *Notes* interchanged prior to the Convention between McMahon and the Tibetan Plenipotentiary. One serious impediment was presented by the original (1929) issue of *Aitchison's Treaties (Volume XIV)*, which happened to give a correct account of what had actually happened in 1914 and which flatly contradicted the twisted *interpretation* which Caroe now wanted to put to these documents. But he felt no qualms in *short-circuiting* it by withdrawing the volume

from circulation, ordering its destruction, and by substituting for it a fresh reprint which contained a garbled account of the episode suiting his immediate requirements. Although this spurious volume was brought out in 1938, it was ensured that it bore the imprint of 1929. These amazing proceedings took place with the approval of the Secretary of State in London. But it passes one's comprehension how the latter could be a party to such a daring and unscrupulous act of forgery. The original and authentic edition of the volume has totally disappeared, barring a few copies, one of which, incidentally, was unearthed by Dr. Gupta himself in the India Office, and the spurious reprint is now the only one available for use. That this has misled many researchers (and genuine lovers of truth) is understandable. But how the high officials of our Ministry of External Affairs could be so easily taken in by it, assuming that they were so taken in, is a mystery which yet to be explored.

As to the frontier of the Western or the Ladakh Sector, as Dr. Gupta has very clearly shown, the British Government had left it more or less undefined at the time of the transfer of power. Thereafter, there was hardly any precise official thinking on the subject till 1954 when, following consolidation of Chinese power in Tibet and the Aksai Chin area and deterioration in Indo-Pakistan relations over the Kashmir issue, a new look seems to have been taken at the frontier problem. That year, following the advice earlier tendered by the North and North-East Border Committee, a new map of India was officially drawn up showing a boundary line of the Ladakh Sector which took the crest of the Kuenlun range and placed within the Indian territory, for the first time, the whole of the Aksai Chin area, notwithstanding the fact that the area was at this time under the actual control of China. The new boundary line was to all seeming a version of the forward line that had been proposed by Sir John Ardagh as long ago as 1897, but had been put out of court by the then General Staff on the ground that it was difficult to defend and was strategically useless in comparison to the Karakoram range, which, it would appear, was treated as the *de facto* frontier of the Ladakh Sector. It is difficult to guess why the Nehru Government suddenly

felt the need for showing an extended frontier in its maps. Dr. Gupta's surmise is that the Government's intention was to confront China with a cartographic *fait accompli* in order to get a better deal from the Chinese in the negotiations that were to take place between the two Governments on the frontier issue. Be that as it may, a more rigid attitude was taken in respect of India's supposed claims to the territories beyond the Karakoram range in November 1959, when in a Note to the Chinese Embassy, the Ministry of External Affairs asserted that the correct boundary of the Sector proceeded from the Karakoram Pass northeast towards Qara Tagh Pass and then follow the Kuenlun range to Peak 21250 east of Longitude 80°E. The Note also made the amazing claim that this line constituted the watershed between the Indus and the Khotan systems, a claim, which, as Dr. Gupta had no difficulty in showing, was opposed to firmly established facts of geography. It would become evident to anyone who would care to look up any authentic map of the region and in particular the Curzon map which Sir John Ardagh had made use of in drawing up his forward line, that it was the Karakoram range and not the supposed boundary that formed the main water-divide of the disputed region.

As to the question of the boundary itself, Dr. Gupta, as already indicated, has convincingly shown that it has been consistently treated as "undefined" by virtually all pre-Independence official sources. In volume XII of *Aitchison's Treaties*, for instance, it is unequivocally asserted that the Northern as well as the Eastern boundary of the Kashmir State (which includes the Ladakh region) was undefined. This is amply corroborated by the great majority of the official maps drawn up prior to 1954, in which the boundary in question is distinctly shown as undefined. The exceptions are few, but none of them supports India's official claim. The map of the Northern Frontier of British Hindoostan (Survey of India, 1862), for instance, shows the Karakoram range as forming this frontier. The "Sketch Map of Eastern Turkestan of 1870" by G. W. Hayward and the "Sketch Map of the Country North of India of 1871" by Robert Shaw likewise show a frontier closely approaching that indicated in the

1862 map: Both Shaw and Hayward conducted actual survey operations in the region under British official aegis and were expected to be acquainted with the precise local situation. Hayward, moreover, in an article in the Journal of *The Royal Geographical Society, Vol. XI, 1870*, explicitly states that the boundary line concerned ran along the main chain of the Karakoram mountain. It needs to be added that it is precisely this range which is indicated as the frontier of the Ladakh region in the article on that area embodied in the *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, and that the map of India, appended to the *Report of the Simon Commission (1930)*, also had shown the very range as approximately making the requisite boundary.

No serious effort was ever officially made to transcend this *de facto* boundary except perhaps in two notable cases. The first serious effort to propose an advanced line was that made by Sir John Ardagh, which, as has been noted, was nipped in the bud. The second move was made two years later by Sir Claude Macdonald, the then British Minister in Peking, who proposed a less ambitious boundary which left to China the whole of Karakash Valley and the greater part of Aksai Chin. But this was not accepted by China. Two other proposals were mooted for an advanced line in 1912 and 1915 but were rejected by London. Of these the Macdonald proposal demands particular attention, because a deliberately distorted version of it came into prominence during the recent border dispute and extravagant claims were put forward on its basis by Nehru himself in his letter to Chou-En-Lai of September 26, 1959. Somehow, he has given the entirely wrong impression that the proposal explicitly asserted that the Northern Frontier of the Ladakh region ran along the Kuenlun range to a point east of 80° East, where it met the Eastern boundary of Ladakh and that the whole of Aksai Chin lay in Indian territory. Dr. Gupta holds the Historical Division of Ministry of External Affairs primarily responsible for feeding Nehru with this wrong information and thereby helping him to take up an uncompromising stand.

By his close-knit arguments, based essentially on documents of unimpeachable authenticity, Dr. Gupta has proved beyond

doubt that there was no justification whatsoever for the fantastic claims made by our policy-makers with regard to the frontiers, both in the Western and North-Eastern Sectors. It will be impossible for anyone who has examined his arguments impartially to cherish any longer any illusion regarding the historical validity of either the McMahon line or its counterpart the so-called Ardagh line on the Western frontier.

Flawless as Dr. Gupta's main thesis is, yet one may perhaps be permitted to say, it leaves certain obvious questions unanswered. He has convincingly established that the British Government from the very outset was reluctant to entertain a forward line on the Assam frontier. It is not, however, at all clear why they had a sudden *volte face* during the late thirties when the wily Olaf Caroe started applying his necromantic art to resuscitate the dead and buried the McMahon line. It may be argued that the Treaty of 1907 which had proved a serious impediment to the ratification of the Tripartite Convention was no longer in existence. But that cannot be regarded as a satisfactory explanation. A repudiated treaty does not automatically revive simply because the ground on which it had to be repudiated has ceased to exist. It has to be replaced by a fresh treaty. But Tibet was still without any international personality and there was no valid means by which an Agreement could be executed with the latter that was likely to be acceptable to the comity of nations. The pressure which the Government were induced to exert on Tibet to make it abide by the terms of the abortive Convention was no more than an act of state which had no legal legs to stand upon. Was the Government of India actuated to extend the frontier to the crests of the Himalayas by a new awareness that might have dawned on them of the strategic importance of the advanced line? But if one would allow himself a retrospective look at the early history of the frontier policy of the British Government, one will be surprised to find that the Himalayan ridges were never regarded strategically as of any particular advantage. When in the wake of Chinese military advance in the NEFA region in 1910 a proposal for a more advanced line was mooted before Lord Minto's Government, the latter summarily put it out of court on the ground that no

strategic advantage was likely to accrue from such a change. It is difficult to imagine that Lord Hardinge's Government could have a view diametrically opposed to it, the more so because Lord Minto had been faced with the problem of dealing with an aggressive China, while by Hardinge's time, China had been rendered relatively harmless by its own internal turmoils. Yet one should admit that the records of the period have not been thoroughly read and till that has been done nothing more useful can be said on the subject.

Sourin Roy

Retired Deputy Director,
National Archives of India

1

IN QUEST OF SOURCE MATERIALS OF THE SINO-INDIAN DISPUTE

My interest in the Sino-Indian border question was initially aroused by Nehru's speech in Parliament on 20th November, 1950. The Prime Minister was replying to a question asked by a Member of Parliament about the Northern frontier, which had become a very real problem at that point of time on the heels of the Chinese Army's advance on to the eastern gateway of Tibet at Chamdo. Nehru declared, "Maps of China for the last thirty years have shown a certain portion of that northeast frontier which is now part of India as not part of India...Our maps show that McMahon Line is our boundary and that is our boundary—map or no map... and we will not allow anybody to come across that boundary". I was particularly puzzled by the phrase "Map or no map". But I could not unravel the mystery.

During 1952-54 I was a student at the London School of Economics, doing my Ph. D. in International Relations. The subject of my thesis was *The Korean Crisis And The Indian Union* (1945-1954). In elucidating Indian policy towards Korea, I had to prepare a long chapter on Indian foreign policy, including India's policy towards China. In this connection, I learnt from a study of Nehru's Press Conferences and parliamentary speeches, that he had declared in 1950 the Himalayas as the Northern frontier of India, and as such had included Nepal within India's defence perimeter. Also since January, 1950, Nehru had been referring to the McMahon Line as the North-east frontier of India, born out of the Tripartite Convention between the representatives of the then Governments of India and Tibet and China. Nehru also stated that later the Chinese Government had not accepted the Agreement, and therefore, had not signed, although the pact had been acted upon by India and Tibet. It was also

revealed in Parliament in March, 1950 by a Congress party M.P. that the Tibetans did not actually abide by the Agreement of 1914 and continued to occupy the Tawang Area east of Bhutan, which was south of the McMahon Line.

As a research student in London during 1952-54 I was mainly concerned about the development of the Korean crisis, which came up before the United Nations in 1947-54. I did not have much time to go into the question of the Sino-Indian borders. There were some bitter comments in the Chinese Communist press about the Indian Government led by Nehru during the period of suspense, between 1st October, 1949 (the day of the establishment of the People's Republic of China) and 30th December, 1949, when India extended official recognition to the People's Republic of China. The Communist Party of India sent a congratulatory message to the Chairman of the People's Republic of China in October, 1949, and Mao Tse-tung replied to the Secretary of the C.P.I., "I firmly believe that relying on the brave Communist Party of India and the unity and struggle of all Indian patriots, India will certainly not remain long under the yoke of imperialism and its collaborators..." This was regarded as highly provocative.

During the period of the Korean War (1950-53), Sino-Indian relations passed through a zigzag course. However, the Korean war was ultimately brought to a halt through an armistice in July, 1953, on the basis of an Indian formula for the release of the prisoners of war—the issue had deadlocked a peace settlement for eighteen months. Soon after the Korean armistice, the conflict in Vietnam between the French Army financially backed by the U.S.A., and the forces of national liberation movement led by Ho Chi Minh intensified. There was also the Pakistan-U.S.A military pact in February, 1954, which brought the cold war to India's door. Then there was the danger of direct American military intervention with nuclear weapons in Vietnam in April, 1954. It was in this context that the Sino-Indian Agreement on Tibetan Trade and Pilgrimage was signed between India and China in Peking on 29 April, 1954, immediately before the opening of the Geneva Conference on Indo-China. This Agreement, which

was followed by a joint declaration by Nehru and Chou En-lai in New Delhi on 27th June, 1954, first referred to the five principles of peaceful co-existence. Though these principles called for mutual respect of each other's territorial integrity, there was no negotiation on the border problem: Nehru visited Peking in October, 1954, and was impressed by the giant strides made in China in various fields since the setting up of the People's Republic. (In an off-the-record chat with Indian correspondents accompanying him on his Chinese trip, Nehru revealed the thoughts passing through his mind. "During a stimulating discussion, the Prime Minister observed that some day or other these two Asian giants were bound to tread on each other's corns and come into conflict, and that would be a calamity for Asia. That was an eventuality we should all strive hard to avert.") But Nehru's inner thoughts remained unknown till 1968, when D. R. Mankekar revealed this in his book "*The Guilty Men of 1962*". (page 9). The main factor which was preventing a peaceful settlement in Asia in the mid-fifties was American intransigence towards the People's Republic of China, which was denied its rightful place in the United Nations as a permanent member of the Security Council. In this context, India took the initiative along with other Colombo Powers (Burma, Ceylon, Indonesia, Pakistan) in calling the first Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung in April, 1955, where China came out of her diplomatic isolation. In 1956-57, the Chinese Premier Chou En-lai paid visits to several neighbouring Asian countries, including India. Chou En-lai visited the Bhakra hydel project and a number of National Science Laboratories in India, and was highly impressed. (An exchange of technical delegations between India and China took place in the fifties to their mutual benefit). The simultaneous visit of the Dalai Lama to India brought to focus the rumblings of unrest in Tibet against the Chinese rule. That however, died down with Dalai Lama's return to Lhasa.

BORDER DISPUTED

After coming back to India in 1955, I began to study the Sino-Indian border question again and searched for Simla Convention maps, which would show the McMahon Line. But I could not find any such maps in academic circles in Calcutta. Though the University of Calcutta taught Far Eastern History as a special subject under the History Department, no scholar could give me guidance in this matter. My cousin, the late Miss P. Sen Gupta, who did her Ph.D. in Geography from the London School of Economics in 1954, however, got me a book on the geography of Asia by the well-known American geographer George B. Cressey.* This volume contained a map of Southern Asia, wherein the Sino-Indian borders in the Eastern as well as the Western sector were marked with crosses, with the words *Borders Disputed* inscribed on them. Dr. P. Sen Gupta also brought to my notice a book entitled *The Continent Of Asia* (1934),** which was used as a textbook of geography in British universities. In this book, the author states that the British Empire in India had no definite boundaries. He depicted the frontier regions from the West to the East as Indo-Iranian, Indo-Afghan, Indo-Tibetan zones. So my doubts about India having definite boundary lines in the North-east or the North increased.

Then suddenly India's Northern border became a live frontier, after the Tibetan uprising in March, 1959 which was followed by the flight of the Dalai Lama to India through the North-Eastern Frontier. The first Sino-Indian border clash took place on 25th August, 1959 in the Subansiri region of the North-East Frontier Agency at Longju, an obscure village of about one hundred tribal people. On 27th August, this minor clash at Longju (involving the death of one Indian border personnel) was publicised in the Delhi press in the front page under a double column. On that very date was also published on the front page under a double column a story to the effect that the Chinese had surreptitiously built a road through Aksai Chin linking Sinkiang and Tibet, and

*George B. Cressey : *Asia—Lands and Peoples* (1944).

**A. W. Lyde : *The Continent of Asia* (1934).

this was presented as a clear case of Chinese aggression. In Parliament, Nehru was cornered on these issues and charged with conniving with Chinese intrusion into Indian territory and keeping Parliament in the dark about the facts of the Chinese transgression upon India's frontiers. On 31st August, Nehru in a speech in the Rajya Sabha described the Chinese intrusion into Longju as "a clear case of aggression". But on Aksai Chin, Nehru took a compromising attitude. During August and September 1959, he declared in several speeches that though Aksai Chin was shown as our territory in Indian maps, that area had always been under challenge and 'not a blade of grass grows there'. On 28th August 1959, Nehru said in the Lok Sabha in this context, "This was the boundary of the old Kashmir State with Tibet and Chinese Turkestan. Nobody had marked it."

In spite of such a pliant attitude shown by Nehru over Aksai Chin, it was puzzling to me, why a compromise border settlement could not be reached between India and China. The Tibetan uprising in March 1959 and the warm welcome extended to the Dalai Lama in India led to the worsening of Sino-Indian relations, as the Dalai Lama and his men indulged in spreading anti-Chinese propoganda and were receiving open support from an influential body of non-Communist opposition as well as secret support from Congressites. On October 21, at a Press Conference in Calcutta, Mr. Nehru said that he did not think there was any 'major idea' behind the recent Chinese incursions into Indian territory. He added, "I am inclined to think that all these were tagged to Tibet. There were no Chinese forces on the other side of the border before the Tibet rebellion. But after the rebellion, Chinese forces came partly to crush the rebellion and partly to stop the Tibetan people from coming over to India, or contact the people whom the Chinese imagined to be connected with the Tibetan rebellion..."

But on that very date there was a bigger clash near the Kongka Pass (where the Karakoram ranges slope down into the Tibetan plateau) in which nine Indian border policemen were killed, while the leader of the Chinese border patrol lost his life. This event suddenly roused nationalist passions both in India and China.

SPOTLIGHT ON SINO-INDIAN FRONTIER

In its Note dated 23rd October, the Government of India protested against the "sudden and aggressive firing by Chinese forces in the region of the Kongka Pass" (near Aksai Chin) and claimed that this area was about 40 to 50 miles west of the traditional Sino-Indian frontier. On the other hand, the Chinese Foreign Ministry in a Note dated 26th October, charged that it was the Indian side which violated the *status quo* in many places on the western and eastern sections of the Sino-Indian boundary, and for the first time threatened that if the Indian troops could cross at will the traditional customary Sino-Indian boundary in the West to intrude into Chinese territory, then the Chinese troops might come to the area south of the so-called McMahon Line.

AMERICAN LOBBY

In November, 1959 I contacted Sardar K. M. Panikkar, who had been the principal adviser to Nehru on China policy in the early years of the Nehru era, to enquire what was the cause of the sudden deterioration in Sino-Indian relations. Sardar Panikkar gave me his answer in two cryptic sentences :

- (1) "A powerful American lobby was operating in India".
- (2) "What had Mr. Apa Pant been doing there ?"

That the American lobby would operate in India to poison the Sino-Indian relations was not unexpected. But the wide ramifications of the American agencies in India infiltrating the Congress and other non-Communist Opposition parties in Parliament and outside Parliament, in the bureaucracy and particularly in the press media were not then clear to me. Mr. Apa Pant, our Political Officer in Sikkim (1955-61), a patriotic ex-Prince, who had been close to the Congress leadership since the late thirties, came under the spell of the Dalai Lama and his elder brother, Mr. Gyalu Thondup, who operated as the political arm of the Dalai Lama. Under their influence Mr. Apa Pant became a champion of Tibetan independence. He tried to convince many senior Indian political leaders including the late Jai Prakash Narain, G. B. Pant (Home Minister), President Rajendra Prasad to take up

the Tibetan cause as their own. He was at least partly instrumental in motivating Jai Prakash Narain to organise Tibet Conventions in major Indian cities to rally public opinion in support of Tibetan freedom, maligning China as an aggressor. Mr. Purshottam Trikamdas, an old associate of Mr. Apa Pant, inspired the International Commission of Jurists to publish two reports on Tibet in 1959 and 1960 trying to establish that Tibet enjoyed *de facto* sovereignty between 1912 and 1951 and that China was guilty of destroying human rights in Tibet. Mr. Pant's pro-Tibetan proclivities were not widely known in 1959. Though the late Communist M. P. Bhupesh Gupta spoke in the Rajya Sabha casting aspersion on Mr. Pant's code of conduct, Mr. Pant's *modus operandi* in promoting the cause of Tibetan independence which ran counter to Nehru's policy of amity with China remained in the twilight.

In the summer of 1961 I visited London for nine months with a British Council travel grant. This gave me an opportunity to work in the India Office Library and Records. At that time, a 50-year rule was operative on the opening of the official records to the public. As a result, a search for the records of the Simla Conference (1913-14) was not possible. But I came across some official publications, which made me sceptical about the Government of India's categorical claims about the Northern frontier as published in the White Papers and the Report Of The Officials On The Boundary Question (February 1961). In his book, "*History of The Frontier Areas Bordering On Assam*" (1942), Sir Robert Reid, then Governor of Assam, refers to the visit of Captain Lightfoot to the Tawang region, east of Bhutan, in 1938, where he found Tibetan administration fully operative. Reid also revealed the attitude of the Tibetan Government towards Tawang as quoted by Sir Basil Gould, the Political Officer in Sikkim, who visited Lhasa in 1936 :

"That (1) upto 1914 Tawang had undoubtedly been Tibetan ; (2) They regarded the adjustment of the Tibet-Indian boundary as a part and parcel of general adjustment and determination of boundaries contemplated in the 1914 (Simla) Convention. If they could with our help secure a definite Sino-Tibetan boundary,

they would, of course, be glad to observe the Indo-Tibetan border as defined in 1914 ; (3) They had been encouraged in thinking that His Majesty's Government sympathised with this way of regarding the matter owing to the fact that at no time since the Convention and the Declaration of 1914 had the Indian Government taken steps to question Tibetan, or assert British authority in the Tawang area." (Page 296)

This book, published by the Government of Assam in 1942 particularly for the benefit of the border officials, was withdrawn from circulation in India in 1943 soon after the declaration of War against Japan. I also came across an article by Sir Robert Reid in the Geographical magazine in January-February, 1944, in which while affirming the McMahon Line, he predicted that the question of Tawang would be reopened after the War.

I also read in *Aitchison's Treaties* Volume XII (1931) that the northern boundary of Assam lay along the Sela range (and not the Himalayan watershed as represented by the McMahon Line): "The Monba living north of the Sela range are under Tibetan administration".

I also found in *Aitchison's Treaties* Volume XII the following remark about the frontier of Kashmir: "The northern as well as the eastern boundary of the Kashmir State is still undefined."

In the first volume of *China Quarterly* 1960, I found an article by Guy Wint on "China And Asia". This contained the following comments on the Sino-Indian border dispute: "The quarrel with India over the Tibetan-Indian frontier was taken up at a time of China's own choosing...Peking may have had provocation. It was far angrier than the world realised at Nehru's harbouring of the Dalai Lama, as a breach of the Five Principles. *Moreover it has a legal case—a better case than most people recognise, since they have not bothered to read documents.*" I learnt much later that Guy Wint was a consultant to the British Foreign Office on Far Eastern Affairs, and that he had been on the staff of the Post-war Policy Planning Committee in the External Affairs Ministry in New Delhi during the War years in the forties. Guy Wint was in fact one of the few scholars who had studied the official documents relating to the Sino-Indian

border. (Due to the 50-year rule, these were not accessible to other independent scholars).

I also came across in London a book entitled : "The Boundary Question Between China And Tibet"—*A Valuable Record Of The Tripartite Conference between China, Britain and Tibet Held in India, 1913-1914* (Published in Peking, China, 1940). This indicated that the Simla Conference (1913-1914) as the Chinese saw it, was concerned with the fixation of the Sino-Tibetan boundary only, and that the Chinese delegate Ivan Chen was precluded by his instructions from the Foreign Office from signing the Simla Convention. "Mr. Chen here said that he was further instructed by his Government to declare before the Conference that the Chinese Government would not recognise any treaty or similar document that might now or hereafter be signed between Great Britain and Tibet." (Page 147)

I spent a lot of time in the Chatham House Press Clippings Library in London. This gave me a vivid picture, how Nehru, a protagonist of Panch Sheel, under the pressure of an ill-informed public opinion was gradually transformed since the spring of 1959 into the embattled patriot of his Agra speech of 10th November, 1959, when he declared to the acclamation of the Indian public, "We cannot allow China to keep a foot on our chest." From the perusal of the classified newspaper clippings, it appeared to me again that the clash near the Kongka pass on 21st October, and then the widely publicised document prepared by the Historical Division, Ministry of External Affairs (then under Dr. S. Gopal), which stressed that "India's Northern frontier has lain where it now runs for nearly three thousand years. The areas along the frontier.....from the Kuenlun mountains in the far north to the junction with Burma in the east, have always been a part of India", largely contributed to the wide rift in Sino-Indian relations.

MAP CHANGED

On coming back to India, I joined the Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi, to prepare the manuscript of *India*

In World Affairs (1957-1959), which would include a chapter on Sino-Indian Relations. In this connection, I studied the Survey of India maps available in the Delhi Libraries. This revealed to me that all Political Maps of India before 1954 showed the Northern boundary extending from Kashmir to Nepal as 'Undefined', while the North-eastern frontier was shown as "Undemarcated." Since 1954, the Survey of India maps were changed. The words "Boundary Undefined", which had been inscribed along the Western and Middle sectors of the frontier at three places were erased. Similarly the words "Boundary Undemarcated" were deleted from over the North-east frontier. This alteration of maps was done surreptitiously without consultation or agreement with China.

A study of the Survey of India maps in circulation in the thirties showed that in the Western sector, India's Northern frontier was delineated approximately along the Karakoram range, which forms the watershed in this region. But in 1945, on the initiative of Sir Olaf Caroe—the then Foreign Secretary, the Survey of India maps were unilaterally changed to register an equivocal claim to the effect that from the east of the Karakoram Pass this boundary extended in the North-east up to the Kuenlun range. This was indicated by a colour-wash with words "Boundary Undefined" inscribed on it.

A study of the Survey of India maps published in the early thirties further revealed that in the eastern sector, the boundary ran along the foothills of the Himalayas, and this more or less coincided with the boundary shown in Chinese official maps. Since 1938, however, the Survey of India maps were surreptitiously altered, showing the McMahon Line, with the word "Undemarcated" imprinted on it.

I found that there were large discrepancies in various Chinese maps, but the Chinese Premier Chou En-lai made it clear in April, 1955 at the Bandung Conference that with some of the neighbouring countries, China's border line had not yet been finally fixed. The surreptitious alteration of Survey of India maps, however, became a primary cause for creating widespread misapprehension among the Indian public that the Chinese were in illegal occupation of more than 14,000 square miles in the Western

sector of the boundary, and also that the Chinese were making unjustified claims to large areas south of the McMahon Line. The Government of India published in 1960 a selective collection of maps of the Northern frontier dated from the middle of the 19th century to date, which would uphold their border claims and expose the weakness of Chinese frontier claims. This atlas did add to the confusion about the rival boundary claims in India as well as in the Western world. A senior American scholar Doak Barnett, wrote in his book, *Communist China and Asia* (1961), that the Sino-Indian border dispute originated in China's "Map-manship." (Page 310) The People's Republic of China published its own collection of maps in 1962 in *The Sino-Indian Boundary Question* (enlarged edition) depicting the Sino-Indian border so as to establish the arbitrary changes made in the Survey of India maps. (Miss Dorothy Woodman wrote in 1969: "The innumerable discrepancies on maps might lead the most naive student of cartography to the view that the devil can quote maps to serve his own purpose" : *Himalayan Frontiers*, Pages 320-321). However, there has been so much brainwashing in the matter of maps in India that even to-day ex-Prime Minister Mr. Morarji Desai is under the impression that China is in illegal occupation of 14, 500 square miles of Indian territory in the Western sector of the Northern frontier.

Mr. Kuldip Nayar wrote about the peculiar conduct of the Government of India in his book *Between The Lines* (pages 137-38) published in 1969: "Then there were all types of 'incorrect' maps available in Delhi. The report was that China was collecting them to controvert India's case. Getting wind of this, the Cabinet decided to bring a Bill to proscribe all those books and maps which would question the integrity of the border. Their publication was regarded as an indirect help to China. The Government itself withdrew several official maps and books which did not indicate meticulously a curve here or a bend there or which left the boundary undefined. Many maps of the Survey of India and books of the Publications Division were withdrawn, and there was a circular sent to return all such material":

In the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act (1961) Section 2,

it was said, "Whoever by words written or spoken, or by visible representations or otherwise, questions the territorial integrity of Indiā in a manner which is, or is likely to be prejudicial to the interests or safety or security of India, shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years, or with a fine or both". This enactment prevented the Indian scholars from studying the roots of the Sino-Indian border dispute from an objective viewpoint. This was compounded by another official decision to keep the old official files in regard to the Northern frontier from the days of the Simla Conference (1913-14) beyond the reach of the independent researchers in India.

HYSTERIA

During my sojourn in New Delhi in 1962-64, the academic atmosphere was vitiated because of the anti-Chinese hysteria then prevalent. As a result most of the scholars accepted the idea that "China has committed unprovoked aggression against India." Most of the senior scholars in the Indian School of International Studies, under Professor A. Appadorai, chose to remain ignorant about the roots of the Sino-Indian border dispute and joined the chorus with the officials of the External Affairs Ministry along with the ill-informed politicians and journalists to condemn China. Only one scholar Dr. J. S. Bains, Reader in Political Science, University of Delhi, wrote in his book entitled *India's International Disputes* (1962) : "...while India is rightfully holding its own in the the area south of the traditional boundary in the eastern and central sectors, the *status quo* in the western sector is more favourable to China" (page 164). But so much pressure was brought to bear on him that Dr. Bains had to retract his comment and issue a statement to the press to the effect that India's claim to unadministered Akasi Chin was quite legitimate. The noted Indian author Nirad C. Chaudhuri wrote in his book *The Continent of Circe* (1965) (pages 119-121) : "Writing in February 1963, I venture to set down that the actual dispute about the Indo-Chinese frontier was and remains a minor and even trivial affair,

with no danger to the real integrity of India. It should never have been allowed to develop into a political crisis, far less a military one. There was nothing in it which should have put the greatest countries in Asia at war with each other.....I would assert most emphatically that the policy of friendly co-operation with China was not only sound but imperative. It should not have been sacrificed to keep, what was once a British imperial frontier." He warned, "There are very large interests which are bent on keeping the dispute and war hysteria alive among the people of India.....these interests are both foreign and domestic. The unholy alliance between the two is faking a picture of danger to India from Chinese imperialistic expansion, when none exists..." He added, "...left to himself, Jawaharlal Nehru would have arrived at a settlement with China which would have been both satisfactory and honourable..." At that time, Mr. Chaudhuri was perhaps the lone voice of dissent among the Indian intellectuals on the Sino-Indian border question:

Anyway in that atmosphere, my manuscript on *India in World Affairs (1957-59)* which had been submitted to the Indian Council of World Affairs in 1964, was kept in cold storage for four years by its Research Board. Apparently, this volume which contained about 150 pages typescript on Sino-Indian relations during 1956-1960, did not satisfy their patriotic zeal which became the hallmark of scholarship in International Relations in India in those days. This was later published in 1969 under the title: *India In World Politics : A Period of Transition* with a Foreword by K. P. S. Menon I. C.S. (Retd).

From April 1964 to May 1969 I was tied to teaching in my College. But I used to spend about two months in New Delhi every year during the holidays for further research on Sino-Indian relations. In this connection, I interviewed India's two senior diplomats, Mr. K.P.S. Menon and the late R. K. Nehru on several occasions. These interchanges were highly illuminating to me in the understanding of the border problem. In the sixties, several important books were published abroad bearing on Sino-Indian relations. Bertrand Russell, the great scientist and philosopher, who had been a champion for the cause of Indian freedom during

the days of the British Raj, wrote in his book *Unarmed Victory* (1963): "The dispute between China and India has not been on any ideological ground, but solely on certain territorial questions in regions where the frontier was ill-defined..."

"This disputed area cannot be said to be decisively Chinese or Indian. I have pored over maps and documents presented by the Chinese and Indians, and the only certain conclusion to which it is possible to come is that each has tenuous claims and neither has decisive ones.

"...It is generally believed in the West, and vehemently asserted by India, that the Indian case, throughout the whole length of the disputed frontier, is legally indisputable. The Chinese, however, have *prima facie* evidence which needs to be examined by uncommitted experts and in good many regions there is no decisive evidence either way." (Pages 65-66)

Dr. Alastair Lamb produced a scholarly book of 192 pages entitled *The China-India Border* in 1963 under the auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, London with a Foreword by the Rt. Hon. Kenneth Younger, Director of the Institute (who was the Minister of State, Foreign Affairs under the Attlee Cabinet). This still remains a classic for all students of Sino-Indian relations. Guy Wint commented on this book in 'The Observer' (London) dated 23.2.1964: "...When the quarrel was last systematically debated by India and China, China produced 255 items of evidence; The Indians replied with 630 items. Both sides clouded the issue by a cuttle fish-like discharge of historical matter, much of which was irrelevant or false. Alastair Lamb insists that the problem is relatively simple provided that the non-essentials are not allowed to intrude. In 180 pages he distils the facts of the dispute, and the result, though eminently scholarly, is also exceedingly readable".

Prophetically Guy Wint concluded: "Mr. Lamb must be ready for the storm of resentment from India which greets all would-be peace-makers. India which bans books with extraordinary fluency has now the opportunity to show that she can be magnanimous and let this one circulate."

Kenneth Younger wrote in the Foreword that the Institute

“presents Dr. Lamb’s study as a scholarly and disinterested contribution to the understanding of a problem which, until it is satisfactorily resolved, must give increasing concern both to the Governments concerned and to the world at large”.

Sir Francis Taker, who was the C-In-C of the Eastern Command in India during the last days of the British Raj wrote in the *Geographical Journal* (May 1964) “The study that Dr. Lamb has made is not only exhaustive but compels one to agree with his conclusion ...yet it may be regretted that, before the crisis of late 1962 was reached and it may be, a point of no return was passed, India did not attempt to offer the few concessions which she could in all justice have made rather than have persisted in her declaration of absolute rights. This might not have solved the problem of Sino-Indian relations; but in attempting it India could hardly have been accused of appeasement.”

Sir Francis Taker concluded, “This little book is easy reading and should be widely studied : in its small compass it covers an amazing amount of ground”.

Mr. K. P. S. Menon referred to this book in his Convocation Address to Indian School of International Studies in December 1969 “as a careful study” (*The Sixties In Retrospect*). The late R. K. Nehru in his conversations with me in New Delhi in the late sixties commended this book as a valuable study of the frontier problem. But alas ! not many Indian readers had access to this book. Though there was no ban on the book, the publisher was persuaded not to export this book to the Indian market by some official agencies. Dr. Lamb’s book produced in 1963, was sent to the Indian External Affairs Ministry, New Delhi, for their perusal in the hope that they would benefit from this study. But that did not happen. In 1964, Mr. G. N. Rao, one of the Indian team of Officials of the Indian External Affairs Ministry who helped to produce *Report on the Sino-Indian Boundary Question* (February 1961), wrote a book entitled : *The India-China Border Dispute : A Reappraisal* in early 1964. The main purpose of this book was to denigrate Alastair Lamb’s book noted above. G.N. Rao says : “Alastair Lamb’s work, *The China-India Border*, has acquired a somewhat special reputation for several reasons. First, the

Chatham House has lent its name to this publication and recommended it as "scholarly and disinterested contribution". Secondly, the conclusion reached in the book have the appearance of being independent and objective. They reject as unjustified the huge claims put forward by the Chinese in the North-East Frontier Area of India, but concede the claims over the bulk of Northern Ladakh as also over certain small parts of the North-East Frontier Area. In effect, the work seeks to find a meeting ground and a compromise, and for this, if for no other reason, commends itself to some people favourably inclined to such a compromise solution." (Page 3).

Dr. Lamb's book had of course, one limitation that in 1963, he had access to British official records up to 1913 only. Though he had then no access to Simla Conference records, Alastair Lamb had access to Sir Robert Reid's book on *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam* (1942), and Mr. J. P. Mill's article on *Problems of the Assam-Tibet Frontier* (JRCAS, 1950) and he knew well that the Tibetan Government did not unconditionally accept the McMahon Line in July 1914, and in fact the Tibetans were in occupation of Tawang and several other areas below the McMahon Line. Dr. Lamb however, took a charitable view, when he said: "The McMahon Line is, on the whole, quite a fair and reasonable boundary between China and India along the Assam Himalaya". (page 169). Due to misinformation emanating from the Indian External Affairs Ministry through the Times correspondent (The Times, 6 March, 1963), Dr. Lamb was misled to believe that in 1927 there were border negotiations between Britain and China which led the British Government "to adopt what amounted to a variant of the Macartney-Macdonald alignment of 1899." (page 112) Anyway, he made the suggestion for acceptance of the Macartney-Macdonald Line, which would only allow the Chinese to be in possession of the road between Sinkiang and Tibet they had built through Aksai Chin in 1956-57, without any protest from India. Recent researches have revealed that in 1947, the Indian Army in their 'top secret' map submitted to the British Cabinet Mission accepted the Karakoram ranges as the northern boundary of India in the western sector, and the claim advanced by the Indian

officials to a boundary line east of the Karakoram Pass extending upto the Kuenlun range via Qaratagh pass has no basis in international law.

FALSE ASSERTIONS

Mr. G. N. Rao makes several false assertions in his book : *The India-China Border*. (1) "The main range of Karakoram...no where forms a watershed" (page 6). This is contrary to the view expressed in the Imperial Gazetteer (1908), also the views expressed by the noted explorers and geographers such as Sven Hedin, Owen Lattimore. (2) "The Kuenlun has traditionally formed a barrier between Sinkiang and Ladakh," (page 7). Between the Karakoram Pass and the Kongka Pass, the Karakoram range has been the barrier, and not the Kuenlun. (Vide the Map of India attached to the Simon Commission Report, Volume I). (3) On page 13, he falsely asserts that the boundary marked by Johnson lay along "*traditional Indian alignment in the Kuenlun area.*" (4) G. N. Rao accepts Dr. Lamb's view that from the Indian side no one except the occasional explorer, big game hunter and nomad visited Aksai Chin before 1950. But then, he illogically argues that "in uninhabited areas such visits are sufficient to establish continuity of title and jurisdiction" (page 60). He does this knowing fully that the Chinese also had similar access to Aksai Chin. (5) G. N. Rao asserts "...the Government of Tibet never repudiated the 1914 agreement." (page 96). From Sir Basil Gould's report after his visit to Lhasa in 1936, we know this is contrary to facts.

Also Mr. G. N. Rao falsely asserts on page 103 that "As late as September 1962, India suggested a definite date (15 October, 1962) for holding negotiations. China rejected all these..." The fact is that on 13 September 1962 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Peking in a Note to the Embassy of India in Peking said, "The Chinese Government regrets that the India Government refuses to hold further discussions on the boundary question as soon as possible on the basis of the report of the officials of the two countries...It

formally proposes that the two Governments appoint representatives to start these discussions from October 15 first in Peking and then in Delhi, alternately." (*White Paper No. VII*, page 73). It is interesting to note that Dr. Gopal, the then Director, Historical Division, External Affairs ministry, New Delhi highly commended this dishonest piece of work to the readers in his Foreword. (It is to be noted that Mr. G. N. Rao was a member of the Indian delegation of officials who visited China in November, 1981).

Sir Robert Reid, the ex-Governor of Assam, wrote in his memoirs: *Years of Change in Bengal And Assam* (1966) the following lines on the McMahon Line: "As late as September 1936 an Assam Government letter recorded that 'the 1914 Convention was never published mainly because the Chinese Government failed to ratify it, and nothing was done to give effect to Sir H. McMahon's recommendation for extension of administration in the Tawang area. Another consequence is that many published maps still show the frontier of India along the administered border of Assam. The latest Chinese atlases show almost the whole of the tribal area south of the McMahon Line upto the administered border of Assam as included in China.' "Be that as it may, the new India of 1947 inherited the McMahon Line as one of the assets of our late Indian Empire, and with it all the loopholes and uncertainties that the Communist Chinese have found so easy to exploit. It cannot be denied that they put forward a plausible case. The whole correspondence from 1914 onwards must be available to the present Indian Government, and there is much in it to make one wonder whether the McMahon Line was really worth the sacrifices and humiliation this dispute has imposed on Indian resources." (page 103)

In 1966, Professor Alastair Lamb's classic two-volume work: *The McMahon Line* was published. In this book based on exhaustive study of the British Foreign Office and the India Office documents, Lamb concluded, "Had McMahon been able to secure Chinese signature to the Simla Convention which would have meant concessions on the Inner-Outer Tibet border alignment which the Dalai Lama might well have refused to accept, it might

IN QUEST OF SOURCE MATERIALS

perhaps have been possible to follow up the Convention with a supplementary Anglo-Chinese agreement on the Assam border. The history of the Simla Conference, of course, made such a settlement impossible for both the Chinese and the British ; and so long as Mr. Nehru and his advisers clung to the validity of the proceedings at Simla and Delhi between October 1913 and July 1914, a settlement of this kind continued to be out of question between Independent India and Communist China." (page 588). Lamb also remarked : "There is a certain irony in the way which the independent Indian Government has clung to the illusory gains of the period 1912-14, apparently unaware that in them lie the roots of the present dilemma. Why Mr. Nehru, while declaring himself committed to a policy of friendship, of peaceful co-existence, with Communist China, should have adhered with such tenacity to those symbols, at least in Chinese eyes, of British Imperialism, the Simla Convention and the McMahon Line notes, is one of the mysteries of the twentieth century.." (page 590)

TWO VERSIONS

In this book, Dr. Lamb made public that Sir J. M. Addis, a British diplomat, produced a paper on *India-China Border Question* in February 1963, which revealed for the first time that "there were two versions of the 1929 *Aitchison's Treaties*, one containing the text of the McMahon Line notes and the Simla Convention, and the other without these documents. Mr. Addis believes that these texts were inserted into the Aitchison collection at a date later than 1929, and that a new volume was substituted for the original volume which omitted these texts. *The original 1929 volume, of which Mr. Addis saw a copy at Harvard University, not only leaves out the texts of the McMahon Line notes and the Simla Convention, but also states that the Simla Conference produced no valid agreements.* In the revised volume, which is to be found in most English libraries, there is a clear implication that the McMahon Line notes and the July text of the Simla Convention are agreements binding in international

law." Being constrained by the 50-years rule about the release of official records, Dr. Lamb could not unveil the process by which the Volume XIV of *Aitchison's treaties* (1929), was made to present contrary versions about the Simla Conference in different copies. Miss Dorothy Woodman, author of *Himalayan Frontiers* (1969) must have been aware of the surreptitious alteration of the text of *Aitchison's Treaties* (1929) in the late thirties undertaken on the initiative of Sir Olaf Caroe, but for reasons other than academic, she chose not to reveal this in her book. (Due to introduction of 30-year rule about the official records in mid-sixties, Miss Woodman had access to documents upto 1938).

In 1968, D. R. Mankekar in his book "*The Guilty Men of 1962*" (page 138) refers to a memorandum issued by Nehru to the External Affairs Ministry, the Defence Ministry, and the Home Ministry in July 1954, a few weeks after the visit of Chou En-lai in June 1954 and the signing of a joint declaration about Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence as a sequel to the Sino-Indian Agreement on Tibetan Trade and Pilgrimage of 29 April, 1954. In this key document, "Nehru described the Agreement as a new starting-point of our relations with China and Tibet, and affirmed that both as flowing from our policy and as a consequence of our Agreement with China, the northern frontier should be considered a firm and definite one, which was not open to discussion with anybody. A system of checkposts should be spread along this entire frontier. More especially, we should have checkposts in such places as might be considered disputed areas.." This document for the first time revealed, how the Survey of India maps were unilaterally changed in 1954 to register an unequivocal claim to the McMahon Line in the North-east and to a version of Johnson-Ardagh Line in the North-west including Aksai Chin in Indian territory. According to critics such as Neville Maxwell, the issue of Survey of India maps in 1954 without consultation with China became a root cause of the Sino-Indian border dispute when Sino-Indian relations were soured in the context of the Tibetan revolt and the flight of the Dalai Lama to India.

In 1969, I visited London for a year to work in the India office

Library with a Travel Grant awarded by the Calcutta University. This gave me the opportunity to unearth the official files available in the India Office Records from the days of the Simla Conference in 1913-14 to 1939. There I found out the original edition of *Aitchison's Treaties*, Volume XIV, published in 1929. It gives the following narrative about the Simla Conference (1913-14): "In 1913 a conference of Tibetan, Chinese and British Plenipotentiaries met in India to try and bring about settlement in regard to matters on the Sino-Tibetan frontier; and a tripartite convention was drawn up and initialled in 1914. The Chinese Government, however, refused to permit their Plenipotentiary to proceed to full signature". This had striking resemblance with the narrative of the Simla Conference printed in the semi-official Chinese book (Peking, 1940): *A Valuable Record of The Tripartite Conference between China, Britain and Tibet* referred to earlier.

I also learnt from the India Office Records, how in the late thirties Olaf Caroe, then Deputy Secretary in the External Affairs Department in New Delhi arranged for the copies of the original *Aitchison's Treaties*, Volume XIV of 1929 to be withdrawn from the libraries, and replaced them by a faked version with an imprint of 1929. In this concocted volume, it was asserted that the Simla Conference was to negotiate an agreement as to the international status of Tibet as also the frontiers of Tibet both with China and India, and that though China refused to ratify the Convention, the Simla Convention was ratified by Great Britain and Tibet by means of a bilateral declaration accepting the terms as binding between themselves. I also learnt from the records, how in 1939 Sir Henry Twynum challenged the advisability of incorporating Tawang within Indian frontiers. I also found evidence that the Government of India vainly tried to persuade the Tibetan Government to accept the McMahon Line, surrendering their claim to Tawang in 1944. (*The China Quarterly* published my article on *The McMahon Line (1914-1947)* in July-September, 1971. The Editor, *China Quarterly* sent a copy of the article to Sir Olaf Caroe for his comments, but he had no comments to make on my analysis of the dubious legality of the McMahon Line.)

On my return to India in the autumn of 1970, I met several retired officials of the External Affairs Ministry, New Delhi and asked them if they were aware about the existence of two versions of Aitchison's Treaties, Volume XIV (1929), which gave completely different interpretations of the proceedings of the Simla Conference. The two key diplomats, Mr. S. Dutta (I.C.S.) who was the Foreign Secretary during 1954-1961, and Mr. G. Parthasarathi, who was the Indian Ambassador in China during 1957-1961 were completely unaware of the existence of the original edition of *Aitchison's Treaties*, Volume XIV. Mr. R. K. Nehru told me that he joined the External Affairs Ministry as an Under-Secretary in late thirties, and that he heard that something was being cooked up by senior officials. But he did not know, what it was. I then approached Mr. K. P. S. Menon who was a colleague of Sir Olaf Caroe in 1938 holding the same rank of Deputy Secretary in the External Affairs Ministry. Mr. Menon who saw my manuscript told me that my findings about the distortions of the Simla Conference records by Sir Olaf Caroe were correct. I then asked him whether Nehru was aware of these facts! Mr. Menon replied that Nehru never went into such details.

In 1974, I was able to publish a collection of my essays under the title *The Hidden History Of The Sino-Indian Frontier*. I wrote the following lines to introduce the book to the readers: "Good relations with China, with whom we share a sprawling frontier along the Himalayas, was one of the cardinal points of Nehru's foreign policy of friendship with all nations. The secret of success of Nehru's foreign policy during the first decade of independence also lay largely in Sino-Indian solidarity.

"This study reveals, on the basis of India Office Records and interviews with key officials of the External Affairs Ministry and Indian Ambassadors posted in Peking during 1950-1961, how the edifice of Sino-Indian co-operation was shattered by the frontier dispute primarily arising out of the difficult border legacy left by the British Raj and the deliberate distortion of historical records relating to India's relations with Tibet."

“HOLY WRIT” ATTITUDE

In preparation of this book, I relied on the vast amount of historical material I have been collecting since 1952 at the Chatham House Library, India Office Library, London School of Economics Library, British Museum Newspaper Library, School of Oriental And African Studies Library, Senate House Library, London ; Libraries in New Delhi such as Sapru House Library, Parliament Library, Central Secretariat Library, Nehru Museum Library ; libraries in Calcutta such as the National Library, U. S. I. S. Library, British Council Library, Jadavpur University Library. This book was generally well-received by critics abroad such as Alastair Lamb in *China Quarterly* (June, 1976), Michael Brecher in *Pacific Affairs* (Spring, 1977), Neville Maxwell in *International Affairs*, London, (April, 1975), Sir H.A.F. Rumbold in *Asian Affairs* (June, 1977). Sir H. A. F. Rumbold, who had been a senior official in the India Office, strongly criticised the ill-advised policy of the Government of India particularly in regard to the western sector of the Northern frontier: “The basic trouble is that, whereas the Raj aimed at borders in the remote areas of the Himalayas and Karakoram mountains which were administratively convenient and were ready to be flexible about them, independent India elevated lines drawn by cartographers into status symbols with the sanctity of Holy Writ.” The book was also generally well received by the critics in the Indian press. However, Dr. P.L. Mehra, author of *The McMahon Line And After*, wrote a critical article in the *Hindustan Times* (25 May, 1975) under the title *Facts About India-China Border*. He comments, “...even the most cursory acquaintance with the proceedings of the Simla Conference and the results that followed from it reveal that the first Simla Convention, and the maps showing the India-Tibet boundary, were initialled by all the three plenipotentiaries, (for) a variety of reasons, of which the most important was the hope that the Chinese would return to full signature of the initialled Convention, HMG fought shy of including the text in the 14th volume of *Aitchison's* 1929 edition. In 1936 when New Delhi pressed hard that such neglect might

lead to later complications, Whitehall agreed to the Convention being published...To blow these cold facts out of all proportions to their intrinsic worth is to be both selective and unfair to one's evidence and the student of history knows nothing that constitutes a graver disservice to the muse." On 20 June, I wrote a letter to Editor in the following vein: "On a perusal of the documents available in the India Office Library and Records, we find that in fixing the McMahon Line i.e. the India-Tibet boundary—which had been secretly agreed upon between the British and the Tibetan delegates (on March 24/25, 1914) and was later (on April 27, 1914) presented as an extension of the Red Line depicting the proposed boundary between China and Inner Tibet in the Simla Convention map—Sir Henry McMahon went beyond the instructions of the British Government. On July 23, 1914, the Viceroy Lord Hardinge, in forwarding a copy of the final memorandum of Sir Henry, the British Plenipotentiary, Tibet Conference to the Secretary of State, London wrote *inter alia*: "We recognise that a consideration of the eastern or Indo-Chinese portion of the North-East Frontier did not form part of the functions of the Conference..."

"The Foreign Secretary to the Government of India in his letter of September 3, 1915, written to Charles Bell, Political Officer, Sikkim, said clearly: "...The Simla Convention has not been signed by the Chinese Government or accepted by the Russian Government and is, therefore, for the present invalid".

"These quotations will, I believe, suffice to convince the *readers that I have neither been selective nor unfair to my evidence.*"

Dr. Mehra chose to remain silent thereafter.

I should mention here two publications: *India's China War* (1970) by Neville Maxwell and *My Years With Nehru: The Chinese Betrayal* (1971) by B. N. Mullik.

Both these books are veritable mines of information on the Sino-Indian border problem based on classified Government of India documents. Maxwell's book is an eminently scholarly work, though carrying a provocative title for the Indian readers. B. N. Mullik's book was written primarily to refurbish the image of the Central Intelligence Bureau which was subjected to severe

criticism in the Henderson Brook's Report on the Indian Army's debacle in the Sino-Indian conflict in October, 1962. The book is full of mis-statements on specific points and is a completely unbalanced work as a historical study. It is ludicrous that he dedicates the book to the nine police men of the border patrol who were killed in a clash with the Chinese near the Kongka Pass on 21st October, 1959. We have evidence in Maxwell's book (page 130) that Nehru wanted to avoid any clash with the Chinese in the Ladakh sector of the boundary, and in a secret directive on 13 September, Nehru warned against sending of forward patrol in the Aksai Chin area. Also Mr. Mullik has given it out in his book (page 243-44) : "On October 23, when the facts of the outrage came to be known, the Prime Minister held a meeting which was attended by the Defence Minister, the Chief of the Army Staff and officers from the Ministries of External Affairs, Home and Defence...The Intelligence Bureau was made the common target by the Army Headquarters and the External Affairs Ministry and accused of expansionism and causing provocations on the frontier...The Army demanded that no further movements of armed police should take place on the frontier without their clearance...the Prime Minister had to give in to the Army's demand." The death of the nine police men is still commemorated every year in India in the police barracks presenting them as victims of Chinese betrayal of India's friendship so as to keep up the anti-Chinese hysteria alive among the Indian policemen. This is an act of utter hypocrisy, in the context of Mullik's own revelation about the provocative role of the Indian Intelligence Bureau in this incident.

Kuldip Nayar makes the following reference to the role of B. N. Mullik in setting up border posts in disputed areas in Ladakh in 1961-62 : "I remember the former Home Secretary, B. N. Jha telling me that it was a 'bright idea' of B. N. Malik, the Director of Intelligence, to establish police posts 'wherever we could' even behind the 'Chinese lines', so as to 'register our claim' on the territory. 'But' then he said, 'Malik does not realise that these isolated posts with no support from the back will fall like nine pins as soon as the Chinese push forward. We are unnecess-

arily exposing the policemen to death. Frankly, this is the job of the Army, but since they have refused to man the posts until full logistic support is provided, we have placed the policemen.” (*Between The Lines*, page 134)

In 1977, the British Council offered me a Travel Grant for a further study of the India Office Records, and I was able to spend two years in London for further research on Sino-Indian relations. From the study of the official records, I became further convinced that during the days of the British Raj upto 1947, there was no change in the British official view about the Kashmir frontier from that stated in *Aitchison's Treaties*, Volume XII (1931) (“The northern as well as the eastern boundary of the Kashmir State is still undefined”). Also I could check up from the records that Dr. Alastair Lamb was correct when he stated that since 1860s upto first world war in 1914, at different periods three boundray lines were proposed in the region east of the Karakoram Pass namely (1) The Karakoram Line (2) The Johnson-Ardagh Line, and (3) The Macartney-Macdonald Line, which was a compromise between (1) and (2). But none of these were confirmed by a treaty with China. I also learnt that the late Professor K. Zachariah, the first Director of the Historical Division, External Affairs Ministry, also reached a similar conclusion in his Note submitted to the North-North-east Border Defence Committee (1951) about the Kashmir frontier. Also I learnt that Nehru was in fact relying on Professor Zachariah's Note when he made several statements in Parliament in August-September, 1959 to the effect that the actual boundary in the Ladakh area of Kashmir “was not very carefully defined. It was defined to some extent by British officers who went there but I doubt if they did any careful survey...” (Nehru's speech in the Lok Sabha, 4th September, 1959). It is unfortunate that Professor Zachariah's Note was put into the cold storage beyond the reach of most of the officials, when Dr. S. Gopal presented a concocted version of history to establish India's boundary claims covering the Aksai Chin area since November, 1959. We know that Dr. Gopal had been sent to London to look into records in the British Foreign Office and the India Office Records and Library, but it is matter of surmise as to

who inspired him to distort the India Office Records. It was however, revealed to me in 1961 by Sir Olaf Caroe that in 1959 the Indian High Commission in London had sought his help in upholding India's border claims. Sir Olaf Caroe has since 1971 been known to the world of learning as a past master of the art of distorting history for his role in suppressing the original volume of the Aitchison's Treaties, volume XIV of 1929 and circulating a concocted volume of the same published in 1938 with an imprint of 1929. What Sir Olaf Caroe did in 1938 in order to establish the British Indian claim to the McMahon Line, Dr. Gopal pursued a similar game in reviving Indian boundary claim in the Ladakh region extending upto the Kuenlun on the basis of a version of the Johnson-Ardagh Line, which had been rejected by the British Raj as being undefendable time and again. (See my article on *The Source Material of The Sino-Indian Border Dispute : Western Sector* in *CHINA REPORT*, May-June, 1981). There is hardly any doubt that Sir Olaf Caroe was the spiritual Guru of Dr. Gopal. Both of them played an important role in brainwashing Nehru and the Indian Cabinet to believe that there was a solid backing of history behind India's present border claims, and this still remains a stumbling block in the path of seeking a compromise solution of the Sino-Indian border problem; as proposed by the Chinese leaders from Chou En-lai in 1960 to Deng Xiao Ping in 1981. So in my article on "*Sino-Indian Relations—Getting the Facts Straight*" in the *Statesman* dated 11th May, 1981 I wrote : "The Indian Government should set up an independent fact-finding Commission under Chairmanship of a Supreme court Judge to scrutinize the new evidence on the Sino-Indian boundary question brought to light by independent researchers in the India office Records in recent years, instead of relying on the *Officials' Report* of February, 1961. This will help them understand why a compromise settlement of the Sino-Indian boundary question is imperative on both sides."

It would not be out of place if I narrate some discussions I had with the members of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing when I visited China on the invitation of the Director of the Institute of Modern History, University of Beijing in May,

1980, particularly on the Sino-Indian border question. The Chinese scholars informed me that the Chinese Foreign Office archives had been taken away to Taiwan in 1949, when the Republican Government of China fled from the mainland. As a result, the Chinese official records relating to the Simla Conference (1913-14) were not available to the Government or the public in China. But they knew that the Simla Conference was concerned with the fixation of the Sino-Tibetan boundary only, and not the Indo-Tibetan boundary. When I asked them if they could tell me why did the new Republican Government of China under General Yuan Shi-kai agree to a Tripartite Conference at Simla in 1913 including Tibet as one of the parties, when under the Anglo-Chinese Convention (1906) and the Anglo-Russian Convention (1907), Tibet had been regarded as a vassal state under the suzerainty of China. They gave me the following reasons: (1) The British Government threatened in 1913 that they would refuse to extend official recognition to the fledgling Republic of China, when the legitimacy of the central government of China was being constantly challenged by the war lords in the provinces. (2) At that time, a six-power Consortium had been set up on the British initiative to raise a big foreign loan for the Chinese Republic so as to stabilise the Chinese currency. The British Government threatened that the Consortium would withdraw the loan offer, if the Chinese Government refused to attend the Tripartite Simla Conference. (3) General Yuan Shi-kai, the provisional President of the Republic, was an Anglo-phile himself, and he harboured secret imperial ambitions, and for this he needed the diplomatic support of the British who were then the most influential foreign power in the Far East. So he was more amenable to the British pressure. At the same time, the Chinese scholars pointed out that the Simla Convention between Great Britain, China and Tibet initialled at Simla on 27 April, 1914, contained the provision in Article 11 that Great Britain and China recognized that Tibet was under the suzerainty of China.

I also learnt from the Chinese scholars in Beijing that Marshall Peng Teh-huai served as the Commander-in-Chief of the People's Liberation Army in Sinkiang in 1949-50 and that he with his

Army crossed the Kuenlun and went to Rudak in Western Tibet traversing through the Aksai Chin area in 1950. It is to be noted that B. N. Mullik asserted that the Chinese Premier "made the false claim that as far as the latter half of 1950 it was along the traditional route in the area (i.e. Aksai Chin) that units of the Chinese People's Liberation Army had entered Western Tibet" (Vide *The Chinese Betrayal* : page 256). On the other hand, H.E. Richardson wrote : "...Aksai Chin is a little frequented and entirely unadministered region...The Chinese force which invaded Tibet from Khotan in 1950 travelled by that route." (*Tibet And Its History* : page 229)

In 1974, a valuable document revealing Nehru's inmost thoughts in regard to Sino-Indian relations was published in *Sardar Patel's Correspondence*, Volume 10 (pages 342-347). Nehru wrote this letter on 18th November 1950 in reply to Sardar Patel's note of 7th November, 1950. Nehru wrote therein *inter alia* : "...In a long term view, India and China are two of the biggest countries of Asia bordering on each other and both with certain expansive tendencies because of their vitality. If their relations are bad, this will have a serious effect not only on both of them but on Asia as a whole. It would affect our future for a long time. If a position arise in which China and India are inveterately hostile to each other, like France and Germany, then there will be repeated wars bringing destruction to both. The advantage will go to other countries. *It is interesting to note that both the U.K. and the U.S.A. appear to be anxious to add to the unfriendliness of India and China towards each other. It is also interesting to find that U. S. S. R. does not view with favour any friendship between India and China.* These are long-term reactions which one can fully understand, because *India and China at peace with each other would make a vast difference to the whole set-up and the balance of the world*". Nehru also foresaw, "if we fall out completely with China, Pakistan will undoubtedly try to take advantage of this, politically or otherwise". (pages 342-347)

The role of the U.S.A. and other Western countries in damaging the neighbourly relations between India and China has already been referred to. We just quote a few lines from Walter Crocker's

book : *Nehru : A Contemporary's Estimate* (1965), "The behaviour of the press, not only in India but especially in the United States, the United Kingdom and other Western countries, during the various Sino-Indian conflicts...was an eye-opener even to Diplomats familiar with the unreliability of much, and the unscrupulousness of some newspaper reporting. The reporting in certain mass circulation newspapers in the United Kingdom and the United States was worse than inaccurate : it was often grossly fabricated....The reporting by some Diplomatic Missions was not much better...Too many of these reports copied untruthful newspapers, or sent back to their Governments what they knew their Governments would like to believe." (Pages 106-107 f.n.) The operations of the C.I.A. in the fifties and sixties, in poisoning Sino-Indian relations through organising the Khampa rebellion in Tibet from India's border regions have been brought to light in recent years [David Wise : *The Politics of Lying* (1973), Victor Marchetti and John D. Marks : *C. I. A. And The Cult of Intelligence* (1974), Fletcher Prouty : *The Secret Team* (1979).] But during the last decade or so, the Soviet Union has been engaged in vigorous anti-Chinese propaganda through numerous Soviet periodicals published in India in English and various Indian languages. As revealed in a recent issue of weekly SUNDAY (October 25, 1981), the Russians are importing by airmail about ten tons of propaganda literature every day into India from Moscow. Most of these material reaching millions of Indian homes contain vicious anti-Chinese propaganda such as imputing Chinese responsibility for the current activities of various dissident groups operating in the North-eastern region of India, which is far from true. This sort of propaganda against Third Countries is in violation of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961). Also this is against the provisions of the Indian Constitution (First Amendment) Act, 1951 which envisages reasonable restrictions on freedom of expression "in the interest of friendly relations with foreign States."

2

HIDDEN HISTORY OF THE SINO-INDIAN FRONTIER

1947-1954

“In international diplomacy, the habit of saying one thing and thinking another is as old as time.”—Lord Birdwood in “A Continent Decides”.

THERE has been complete ignorance among large sections of the Indian public regarding the truth of the British legacy about the Northern frontier. The survey of India maps published in free India during 1947-1952 depicted the North-eastern border of India eastward from Bhutan along the Himalayan highcrest-line as ‘undemarcated’, while the western sector and the middle sector of the Northern border beginning from the north-western end of Kashmir to the tri-junction of Nepal-Tibet-India were shown by a colour-wash with the words ‘Boundary Undefined’ imprinted thrice along the stretch. In the authoritative publication of the Foreign and Political Department of the British Government of India, generally known as *Aitchison’s Treaties*, relating to Kashmir, it was written explicitly, “The northern as well as the eastern boundary of the Kashmir State is still undefined”. (Vol. XII, Part I, p. 5, 1931).

The Indian public never bothered about the undefined frontier along the Kashmir sector, because the Government of India had been declaring from time to time since October, 1947 that the future of Kashmir would be finally decided through a UN-supervised plebiscite after the withdrawal of the invaders coming from the Pakistan territory. The Indian attitude towards the future of Kashmir gradually hardened since the signing of the Pak-American military aid agreement in February, 1954. But even then we find that in a resolution adopted on as late as December 2, 1957, the UN Security Council took cognition of the fact that the Governments of both India and Pakistan did “recognise and

accept the provisions of its resolutions dated 17th January, 1948 and resolutions of the UN Commission for India and Pakistan dated August 13, 1948 and January 5, 1949 which envisage in accordance with their terms the determination of the future status of the State of Kashmir in accordance with the will of the people through the democratic method of free and impartial plebiscite". This would at least partially explain why Nehru did not raise any point of dispute about the Kashmir frontier specifically either when he visited Peking in October, 1954, or later in the winter of 1956-1957 when Chou En-lai paid visits to India. A close scrutiny of the Chinese maps¹ would show that since the thirties these showed the Karakorams as the border in the north of Kashmir, and this was not challenged by the Government of India till 1958 in an acute form. During 1946-1949, the period of the Republic of China headed by Chiang Kai-shek, the issue of the Northern border was not publicly raised by any side. But during the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi in April, 1947, the Chinese delegates strongly protested about the display of a Map of Asia showing Tibet outside the boundaries of China, and consequently the map was withdrawn. There were, however, several official Notes exchanged, bearing on the border issue during this period. On October 16, 1947 the Government of Tibet sent a cable to the Government of India asking for the return of what were described as Tibetan territories from Assam to Ladakh, including such areas as Sikkim, Darjeeling and Bhutan. The Government of the Republic of China addressed four protest Notes to the British Embassy in China on the gradual encroachment by the British into Chinese-claimed territory south of the 'so-called McMahon Line' (July, September and November of 1946 and January, 1947). The KMT Government protested on the same issue by a note with the Indian Embassy in China in February, 1947. On November 18, 1949, the Chinese Ambassador to India of the Nationalist Government delivered a Note to the Indian Ministry of External Affairs repudiating the Simla Convention which the Indian Government

1: e.g. The map attached to "The China Handbook (1937-43)", compiled by the China Ministry of Foreign Affairs, New York : the Macmillan Company.

held to be valid. Since these Notes were kept confidential, the Indian public were unaware that they inherited from the British a vexing border problem in the North-East Frontier.

Soon after the recognition of the People's Government of China on December 30, 1949, the Government of India felt it necessary to make it clear to the public that they considered the McMahon Line as the legally valid boundary. In reply to a question by H. V. Kamath in Parliament on the international status of Tibet on February 8, 1950, Nehru said, "In the early years of this century, a Convention was held between the representatives of the then Government of India and Tibet and of China and at this certain decisions were arrived at. Roughly speaking, the decisions were about the boundary of Tibet and India called the McMahon Line, that Tibet should be treated as an autonomous country, and subject to China agreeing to this, some kind of Chinese sovereignty should be acknowledged. This was agreed to by them. But later, the then Government of China did not accept this agreement and, therefore, did not sign it. In fact, although this agreement has been acted upon in India and Tibet, there has been no formal signature to it by the Chinese Government. So the matter stands there. Tibet is treated as an autonomous country and its exact relationship to China was not accepted by China."

On March 17, 1950, Debkanta Barooah revealed in Parliament facts which showed that Tibetan officials were forcibly collecting money from NEFA hill tribes, and also that the Assam Government was making an annual payment of Rs. 5,000 to the Tawang Monastery in NEFA which was under Tibetan administration and that the bulk of this money was sent to the Drepung Monastery in Lhasa. So it came to be known that Tibetans did not abide by the Simla Agreement 1914 and still continued to occupy the Tawang area east of Bhutan.

A dangerous situation suddenly arose in the Far East with the outbreak of War in Korea on June 25, 1950. In the beginning India thought North Korea to be responsible for launching an aggression against South Korea and supported the US-sponsored resolution in the UN Security Council recommending punitive measures against North Korea, a satellite of the Soviet Union.

SPOTLIGHT ON SINO-INDIAN FRONTIER

This resolution was passed in the absence of two Great Powers, viz, the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. (Due to USA's opposition, the People's Republic of China could not take its seat as a permanent member of the Council and the Taiwan Government was allowed to represent China. The Soviet Union boycotted the proceedings of the Security Council as a protest on this issue during the period from January 13 to July 31, 1950.) There was resentment in China and the Soviet Union against India's siding with the West on a Cold War issue. K. M. Panikkar, the then Indian Ambassador to China, was able to provide a better appraisal of the facts about the Korean conflict and convince Nehru that there could be no settlement of the Korean conflict without bringing its next-door neighbours, the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, into the fold of the Security Council. On July 13, 1950, Nehru sent personal messages to Stalin and Acheson pleading for an early mediation to stop bloodshed in Korea, and stressed therein the necessity of the presence of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China in the Security Council. Though this peace overture failed due to American intransigence, it created a favourable atmosphere for India starting a dialogue with China to tackle bilateral issues such as Tibet.

'LIBERATION' OF TIBET

In August 1950 there were several communications between Indian Ambassador K. M. Panikkar and Chinese Prime Minister Chou En-lai and the officials of the Chinese foreign ministry. In the Chinese press and radio at that time there were constant allusions to the immediate necessity of 'liberating' Taiwan and Tibet. In an Indian Note dated August 12, 1950, it was stated that "the Government of India never had nor do they have now any political or territorial ambitions in Tibet". In this note, the Government of India also represented to the Government of China that it was concerned at the possibility of unsettled conditions across the border and strongly urged that Sino-Tibetan relations should be stabilised through peaceful

negotiations. The Chinese reply, dated August 21, 1950 stated that the Chinese Government is "happy to hear the desire of the Government of India to stabilise the Chinese-Indian border". It also expressed their willingness to solve the problem of Tibet by peaceful and friendly measures. On August 22, Chou En-lai called K. M. Panikkar for a general discussion. In this conversation, Panikkar took the opportunity of pressing home the desirability of restraint and moderation in regard to Taiwan, and also raised the question of Tibet. Panikkar wrote in his memoirs : "In regard to Tibet, I knew they were a little uncertain about our attitude, I expressed the hope that they would follow a policy of peace in regard to Tibet. Chou En-lai replied that while the liberation of Tibet was a 'sacred duty', his Government were anxious to secure their ends by negotiations and not by military action...". (*In Two Chinas*, p. 105.) On August 26, K.M. Panikkar in an *aide memoire* to the Chinese Government recognised the fact that the regional autonomy granted to Tibet was an autonomy within the confines of Chinese sovereignty and added : "The recognised boundary between India and Tibet should remain inviolate". On August 31, 1950 the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed the Indian Government through Ambassador Panikkar that the Chinese People's Liberation Army was going to take action soon in Western Sinkiang according to set plans and expressed the hope that the Indian Government would assist the delegation of the local authorities of Tibet so that it might arrive in Peking in mid-September to begin peace negotiations.

On October 7, 1950 when the UN Army under American Command decided to cross the 38th Parallel and invade North Korea, Nehru strongly opposed the action. Apart from his objections on moral grounds, Nehru was convinced that the invasion of North Korea was bound to result in Chinese intervention which might lead to an extension of the conflict in the Far East. The Chinese Army at this time launched an attack on Chamdo, a border town in the disputed area of Western Sinkiang. Chamdo fell on October 19 and the Chinese were poised for an invasion of Tibet. The Tibetan delegates called to Peking for negotiations for a political settlement had been nonchalantly procrastinating in India for more than six

months on specious pleas, and apparently they received support from some high officials of the Indian External Affairs Ministry. On October 25, 1950, Peking Radio broadcast that the process of liberating Tibet had begun. On October 26, the Government of India sent a note to the Chinese Government protesting against the use of force in Tibet. On October 30, the Tibetan Government asked for diplomatic assistance in the dispute with China. In their second Note dated October 31, 1950, India again made strong protests to China on the issue of sending an army into Tibet, also made it an occasion to remind China of certain privileges in Tibet which the Government of India had inherited from the British Raj. (These related to the presence of an Indian Agent in Lhasa, existence of Trade Agencies at Gyantse and Yatung, maintenance of post and telegraph offices on a trade route upto Gyantse and the existence of a small military escort at Gyantse. (The Indian Note did not mention that these privileges arose mainly out of the secret Anglo-Tibetan Trade Regulations of July 3, 1914, an offshoot of the Simla Convention of the same date declared illegal by Republican China.) Though the Chinese Government resented this diplomatic interference by India in the matter of Tibet, the Chinese army made no further movement from Chamdo. On the other hand, the Government of India did not try for long to dissuade the Tibetan delegation staying in India from going to Peking, as they had implicitly warned in their Note to China dated October 26, 1950.

DIFFERENCES WITHIN INDIAN GOVERNMENT

But in October-November, 1950, there were sharp differences within the Indian Government as to how much support should be given to the Tibetan Government in maintaining *de facto* independence which it had enjoyed since 1912. The Deputy Prime Minister, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was in favour of military intervention in Tibet and he had support from some members of the Cabinet and the Foreign Office. But the Army Chief, General Cariappa, poured cold water on the plan of military intervention in Tibet to save it

from China. (B. N. Mullick, *"The Chinese Betrayal"*, pp. 80-81.) The Tibetan Government was encouraged by some official groups in India to submit a complaint of invasion and aggression against Communist China on November 7, 1950 to the United Nations. When the matter was raised in the General Committee on November 15, it was decided that the Tibetan question should not be included in the General Assembly agenda. The Indian delegate in the Committee said that he was certain that a peaceful settlement could be made and Tibet's autonomy could be safeguarded, and that the best way to ensure this was to abandon the idea of discussing the matter in the General Assembly. Failing to receive any sort of military or diplomatic support from the major powers, the Dalai Lama left Lhasa on December 21, 1950 to escape from the Chinese attack and settled at Yatung near the Indian border. The Dalai Lama also wrote to the Government of India seeking political asylum but this was refused on the advice of K. M. Panikkar.

On November 7, 1950 Sardar Patel who was in favour of an interventionist policy *vis-a-vis* Tibet, gave vent to his feelings in a confidential letter to Nehru. Sardar Patel asserted in this letter, "...*The undefined state of frontier* and the existence on our side of a population with its affinities to Tibetans or Chinese have all the elements of potential trouble between China and ourselves... Communism is no shield against imperialism and...Communists are as good or as bad imperialists as any other. Chinese ambitions in this respect not only cover the Himalayan slopes on our side but also important parts of Assam". (Quoted in Kuldip Nayar *"Between the Lines"*, p. 218.) On November 9, 1950 Sardar Patel blurted out in a public speech that there might have been a world war on the issue of Tibet. In the context of sharp division within the Cabinet, Nehru thought it necessary to assure the members of the Indian Parliament that "Map or no map, McMahon Line was our definitive frontier, and no one will be allowed to cross that frontier". Nehru also assured the MPs in the same speech that "The frontier from Ladakh to Nepal is defined chiefly by long usage and custom" (November 20, 1950). In answer to a question by an MP whether this boundary was recognised by the existing

Tibetan Government, Nehru admitted that parts of the Indo-Tibetan boundary had not been recognised. But he did not make it clear which parts of the boundary had not been accepted by the Tibetan Government. On December 6, 1950, Nehru repeated in Parliament an earlier statement (March 17, 1950) that the Himalayas formed India's traditional Northern frontier and that since Nepal was on this side of the Himalayas, any threat to the security of Nepal would be considered a threat to India's security.

In November 1950, the Indian Government decided to set up a Committee under the Chairmanship of Major-General Himmat-singhji, Deputy Minister of Defence, with representatives of Defence, Communication, Home and External Affairs Ministries to study the problems created by the Chinese invasion of Tibet. The North and North-Eastern Border Defence Committee was established in February, 1951. The report of the Committee was submitted to the Defence Ministry in early 1953. The major recommendations of the Committee were "the reorganisation and expansion of the Assam Rifles, the extension of the administration in the NEFA, development of intelligence network along the border, development of civil armed police, development of communications and check posts." (*Prime Minister on Sino-Indian Relations*", Vol. 1, In Parliament, p. 251.) The Border Defence Committee must have also recommended a precise definition of the North and North-east border which it proposed to defend.

Due to the dangers of expansion of the Korean War in November 1950, the question of the Indo-Tibetan border was, however, relegated to the background for some time to come. The Chinese Army halted its march after the fall of Chamdo on the eastern border of Tibet. Nehru had been highly critical of the decision of the UN army under American leadership to cross the 38th Parallel to invade North Korea in October 1950. The collapse of General MacArthur's offensive in late November, 1950 in the face of the massive counter-attack launched by the ill-equipped Chinese Army, and President Truman's talk about the possibility of dropping an atom bomb enhanced the danger of a World War. This also stimulated anti-Western feeling through-

out Asia. Nehru became conscious by then about the shift in the world balance of power caused by the emergence of China as a formidable land power able to face the American challenge in Asia, as also the advantageous position gained by India in holding a middle-ground in the new power balance. Nehru and his advisers thought that, as Vijayalakshmi Pandit put it, "...a war is a greater threat to us than Communism in Asia" (*New York Times*, January 1, 1951.) In this context it became necessary for India to avoid bickerings with China on the issue of Tibet so that it might act as an honest peace-broker between the warring parties. In a BBC broadcast from London on January 13, 1951, Nehru said, "China, in her new-found strength, has acted sometimes in a manner which I deeply regret. But we have to remember the background of China, as of other Asian countries—the long period of struggle and frustration, the insolent treatment that they received from imperialistic powers and the latter's refusal to deal with them in terms of equality. It is neither right nor practical to ignore the feelings of hundreds of millions of people. It is no longer safe to do so".

In January 1951, the Chinese and the UN Army led by the Americans were locked in severe battle in Korea in the wake of the Chinese counter-offensive, while India was busy leading Arab-Asian nations in the United Nations seeking a formula for peace based on *status quo ante bellum*. On February 2, 1951, the Government of India chose to take over Tawang, which though south of the McMahon Line continued to be an important centre of Tibetan administration. There was no protest by China to the Government of India on the issue of Indian occupation of Tawang, while the Tibetans staged a demonstration before the Indian Mission in Lhasa when the news reached there. The quiet acquiescence of Communist China on the issue of Tawang convinced the Government of India that it would be possible to establish Indian control over the whole of the NEFA area without any opposition from Peking. This was quite in contrast to the attitude of the Nationalist Government of China which had sent several protest Notes on the question of Indian incursion in the NEFA area. The North-eastern frontier

was the only vulnerable area through which an attack might be launched by China against India—at least this has been the opinion of the Indian Army Headquarters since 1910, when General Chao Erfeng's army moved about the NEFA area in its march on to Lhasa. Since the mid-thirties, it has been an aim of the Foreign and Political Department of the Government of India to push the North-East frontier from the foothills of Assam to the crest line of the Himalayas. But due to the stiff opposition of the Tibetan Government with whom the British Government wanted to maintain the best of terms with a view to using it as a buffer state *vis-a-vis* China, the mighty British Raj failed to implement the so-called McMahon Line as the North-eastern boundary of India. The taking over of Tawang in the first week of February, 1951 without any opposition from the Chinese was rightly regarded by the Government of India as indicating that the People's Republic of China was psychologically prepared to accept the McMahon Line as the *de facto* boundary. On February 1, 1951, India and Burma were the only non-Communist Powers which opposed the US sponsored resolution in the UN General Assembly declaring China as guilty of aggression in Korea. This led to a further improvement in Sino-Indian relations during this period. On February 12, 1951, Nehru told the Indian parliament, "The House will remember that we were aggrieved at a certain turn of events in Tibet, but we did not allow that to affect our policy or our desire to maintain friendly relations with the People's Government of China. I am glad to say that our relations with the New China are friendly at present".

On March 28, 1951, B. V. Keskar Deputy Minister for External Affairs, explained India's policy in regard to the Indo-Tibetan frontier in the Lok Sabha : "The Government is not unmindful of the protection of our frontiers adjoining Tibet. I may go further and say that the Government feels that the best way of protecting that frontier is to have a friendly Tibet and a friendly China. It is obvious that such a complicated and big frontier cannot be well-protected if we have a border country which becomes hostile to us. Therefore, we feel that in tackling the question of Tibet and China, we should always keep in mind that a friendly China

and a friendly Tibet are the best guarantee of the defence of our country.”

By the end of 1950, the Tibetan Government had realised that neither India nor the Great Powers were prepared to give them diplomatic or military support to bolster up their pretension of independence. In April 1951, negotiations started in Peking between the Chinese and Tibetan delegations and this resulted in a 14-point Agreement on May 23, 1951. This Agreement gave assurance of local autonomy, but provided for the gradual incorporation of the Tibetan Army into the People's Liberation Army of China and the exclusive handling of the foreign affairs by the Central People's Government of China.

From a speech delivered by Nehru in Parliament on November 25, 1959, we get a chronology of Sino-Indian negotiations on the question of Tibet in 1951-1952. "...in an informal conversation with the Indian Ambassador on September 27, 1951, Premier Chou En-lai expressed his anxiety to safeguard in every way Indian interests in Tibet on which matter 'there was no territorial dispute or controversy between India and China'." He added: "The question of stabilisation of the Tibetan frontier was a matter of common interest to India, Nepal and China and could best be done by discussions between the three countries. Since the Chinese Army entered Lhasa in pursuance of the Sino-Tibetan Agreement of 1951 to take up frontier posts, it was necessary to settle the matter as early as possible." On October 4, 1951, the Indian Ambassador in Peking informed the Chinese Premier that the Government of India would welcome negotiations on the subjects mentioned by Premier Chou En-lai.

Sardar Panikkar came to India in October 1951, and had consultations in the External Affairs Ministry about the attitude to be adopted regarding Tibet. Panikkar hoped that the Chinese would not move a considerable armed force into Tibet...he further said that extraterritorial rights had no place in the relationship between two independent countries in modern time and India would put herself entirely in the wrong by insisting on the continuance of the rights which the British had forcibly extorted from Tibet. In any case China would not agree to their continuance

and there was no way by which India could enforce them except by force of arms which India was not in a position to employ. So the best policy would be to give up gracefully all that was untenable and insist on economic and cultural rights which were of a more fundamental nature and were not necessarily based on treaties. Panikkar's views were shared by the Government of India." (B. N. Mullik : *My Years with Nehru*, p. 147.)

In February 1952, the Indian Ambassador in a meeting with the Chinese Premier gave a statement on the existing Indian rights in Tibet and reiterated India's willingness to arrive at a mutually satisfactory settlement. Premier Chou En-lai replied that there was "no difficulty in safeguarding the economic and cultural interest of India in Tibet". He did not refer to the frontier question in his reply ; nor did the Indian Ambassador raise this question specifically then." (*Nehru's speech in Parliament* on November 25, 1959.)

In May 1952, before his departure from China, Panikkar had further conversations with Chou En-lai regarding Tibet. While accepting the legitimacy of our trade and cultural interests in that area, he suggested that the Political Agency in Lhasa, an office of dubious legality, should be regularised by its transformation into an Indian Consulate in exchange for a similar Chinese office in Bombay. So far as our other posts and institutions were concerned, some of them like telegraph lines, military escort at Yatung, were to be abolished quietly in time, and the trade agents and other subordinate agencies brought within the framework of our normal consulate relations. These were to be taken up when circumstances were ripe. (*In Two Chinas*, p. 175). Neither side raised the issue of the boundary.

It has been brought to light by Neville Maxwell that in 1952 G. S. Bajpai, the first Secretary-General of the External Affairs Ministry, who retired in May and was posted as the Governor of Bombay province, wrote a letter to his old Ministry, urging that India should take the initiative in raising the question of the McMahon Line with the Chinese Government. He warned that to China the McMahon Line might be one of those 'scars left by Britain in the course of her aggression against China, who may

seek to heal or erase this scar on the basis of frontier rectifications that may not be either to our liking or our interest'.

Nehru discussed this suggestion with K. M. Panikkar, the Ambassador to China, who was in New Delhi for consultations, and Panikkar replied to Bajpai. He told him that the Prime Minister had decided that it was not in India's interest to raise the question of the McMahon Line. Nehru, he explained, had taken the view that since India had unequivocally and publicly stated that it regarded the McMahon Line as the boundary, it should be left to China to raise the subject. If India were to do so, "we should force the Chinese to one of two attitudes: either the acceptance of a treaty signed by us with Tibet, or a refusal of it coupled with an offer to negotiate. The first is not altogether easy to imagine, considering that every previous Chinese Government has refused in terms to accept an Indo-Tibetan treaty as binding on them. The second would not be advantageous to us".

If, on the other hand, "China raised the issue", Panikkar went on, "we can plainly refuse to reopen the question and take our stand that the Prime Minister took in his public statement, that the territory on this side of the McMahon Line is ours and there is nothing to discuss about it". (*India's China War*, pp. 76-77.)

After the departure of K. M. Panikkar from Peking, there were some bickerings between the Governments of India and China in July-August, 1952 over the despatch of fresh Indian troops to replace the guards at Gyantse and Yatung, seizure of the wireless set of the Indian Trade Agent at Gartok, refusal to allow the Political Officer in Sikkim to visit Lhasa without a proper Chinese visa. (B. N. Mullik: *My Years with Nehru*, pp. 149-150.) But again, the issue of the Indo-Tibetan border was not raised by any side. On September 15, 1952 there was an official announcement in New Delhi that the Indian mission in Lhasa was henceforth to be designated as Consulate-General, and that three Trade Agencies at Gyantse, Gartok and Yatung were to be under the general supervision of the Consulate in Lhasa. In the press communique it was declared that the change in status resulted from the fact

that the foreign relations of Tibet were currently conducted by the People's Republic of China.

Since October 1952, India's diplomatic activities were concentrated on bringing the Korean War to a close through devising a compromise formula on the vexed question of the repatriation of the prisoners of war. The question of P.O.W.s hamstrung the armistice negotiations for about two years. The coming to power of the Republican Party in the U.S.A. meant that the influence of the China Lobby, which was pledged to 'roll back the mud tide of Communism in Asia' was ascendent in American politics. The armistice in Korea was signed in July 1953, mainly on the basis of an Indian formula, but India was excluded from the membership of the proposed political conference on Korea in the voting of the U.N. General Assembly due to the hostile attitude of the U.S.A. towards Indian neutralism. India had also become aware of the negotiations going on between the U.S.A. and Pakistan about bringing Pakistan into a military alliance with the U.S.A. as early as September 1952. The aggravation of the conflict in Indo-China in 1953 also contained new portents of a widespread conflict in Asia. This danger of war in Asia due to the threat of American expansionism prompted the Government of India to mend their fence with China. In September 1953, the Government of India approached the People's Government of China for negotiation regarding the outstanding questions concerning Tibet.

In November 1953, there were further discussions in the External Affairs Ministry in New Delhi, in which it was again decided that the question of the Indo-Tibetan boundary was not to be raised in the forthcoming conference with China in Peking. According to B. N. Mullik, "...one view expressed during the briefing of our delegation was that the question of India's northern frontier should also be settled during the negotiations. But the general view was that we should not allow China to take this opportunity to take up the whole issue. In any case, China was not going to recognise the McMahon Line which we considered to be our northern frontier and so there could not be any negotiations on that score." (*My Years with Nehru*, pp. 155-156.)

The Conference opened in Peking on December 31, 1953. Premier Chou En-lai at the first meeting said that the relations between China and India were becoming closer every day and that from among the outstanding questions the two sides could settle questions which were ripe for settlement. The Indian Ambassador then pointed out that there were only small questions pending between India and China but he wished to see nothing big or small remaining outstanding between the two countries. Premier Chou En-lai replied that two large countries like India and China with a long common frontier were bound to have some questions, but all questions could be settled smoothly. (See Note of the Government of India to the Chinese Government, February 12, 1960, *White Paper No. III*, p. 91). According to B. N. Mullik, "...the conference started with the two sides speaking in two voices, the Indians insisting that all 'pending questions' should be discussed and settled and the Chinese holding the view that only 'such questions as were ripe for discussion' should be taken up leaving the rest for future settlement. In India's view the border question did not exist but the Chinese kept this issue open to be taken up when a suitable occasion would arise." (*My Years with Nehru*, p. 151.)

The Agreement "on Trade and Intercourse between Tibet Region of China and India" was signed on April 29, 1954. India gave up all the extra-territorial rights which British Government in India had exercised in Tibet by virtue of the secret Anglo-Tibetan Trade Regulations of July, 1914. The central provisions of the Agreement dealt with the regulation of trade markets, routes and procedures for traders and pilgrims. The treaty provisions were supplemented by a Note dealing with the withdrawal of Indian military escorts and the handing over of Indian post and telegraph facilities and Indian rest-houses to the Chinese. The most important elements of the treaty was contained in the title of the agreement itself in which Tibet was referred to as the "Tibet region of China". This was a definite assurance to China that India had discarded once for all the British policy of bolstering up Tibet as a buffer state. The preamble to the Agreement contained the five principles (1) mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, (2) mutual non-aggression, (3) mutual

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non-interference in each other's internal affairs, (4) equality and mutual benefit, and (5) peaceful co-existence. Of these (1) and (4) are the basic principles declared by Chairman Mao Tsetung on October 1, 1949 to be followed by the People's Republic of China in establishing diplomatic relations with foreign governments. The points (2) and (3) provided a sort of reassurance of China's peaceful intent towards India. Peaceful Co-existence was the common desire of both sides.

The boundary question arose only indirectly during discussions on Article 4. The Chinese side introduced a draft stating that the Chinese Government 'agrees to open a number of mountain passes.' The Indian side objected on the ground that this was a way of claiming ownership over what were in fact border passes. The Chinese then withdrew their draft by describing it as a concession. Finally, it was laid down that pilgrims and traders could travel through the following passes and routes : (i) Shipki La, (ii) Mana Pass, (iii) Niti Pass, (iv) Kungri Bingri Pass, (v) Darma Pass and (vi) Lipu Lekh Pass.

It is curious to note that the border passes regulating the flow of trans-Himalayan trade and pilgrimage mentioned in the 1954 Agreement belonged to the Central sector of the border only. There was no reference to border passes either in the Eastern sector where a potential dispute in regard to the Indian claim to the McMahon Line existed, or in the Western sector which represented the frontier of the Kashmir state. The Government of India must have deliberately avoided raising the issue of border passes in the Eastern sector of the frontier and the Chinese also kept silent on the issue denoting tacit acceptance of the McMahon Line. But it is now known from the authoritative source of the Indian I.B. Chief, B. N. Mullik, that the Indian side did try to fix border marts in the Western Tibet for the benefit of Ladakhi traders. But, "...the Chinese delegate would not discuss the question of trade marts in Western Tibet on the ground that this related to Kashmir which was under dispute between India and Pakistan". (*My Years with Nehru*, p. 153). B. N. Mullik also refers to "the refusal of the Chinese to recognise the customary trade mart in Rudok (Western Tibet) without ascribing any

particular reason” and comments, “This was no doubt because the Chinese were building the road from Rudok to Sinkiang via Aksai Chin.” (*ibid*, p. 153).

Though both India and China were eager to reach agreement in the context of the worsening international situation caused by the policy of brinkmanship declared by the American Secretary of State, there was tough bargaining when the Chinese delegates insisted on having a trade establishment in strategic Simla. The Agreement was held up for six weeks over the proposal. Nehru succeeded in giving that right in Delhi, instead. “Finally Peking agreed on Delhi because it wanted the fact of the agreement to become known about the time the Geneva Conference opened.” (INSAF in *The Hindustan Times*, May 7, 1954).

The Sino-Indian Agreement had mixed reception in the Indian Press. There was a hope that in return to handing over the privileges enjoyed in Tibet due to the British legacy, India might be permitted to reopen its consulate in Kashgar (Sinkiang). But the Kashgar consulate could not be included in the agenda inasmuch as the People’s Republic of China had declared Sinkiang a closed area. It was admittedly a great gain that India could establish a consulate in Lhasa—an ideal listening post for Central Asia—on a regular basis. The Indian Mission established by the British in Lhasa in the thirties was an office of dubious legality.

According to S. S. Khera, former Cabinet Secretary and Principal Defence Secretary to the Government of India, “Nehru, with his sense of history and of the need for long-term stability of friendly relations between the two great and ancient nations, had hoped for a 25-year agreement in the first instance. But the Indian negotiators succeeded in achieving only a comparatively short-term agreement for 8 years……”

“Jawaharlal Nehru was disappointed. Also late in the day as it was, his suspicion about the Chinese intentions were aroused. He stoutly defended the 1954 Agreement; but he also gave instructions to set up border posts, to safeguard the country’s northern frontiers.” (*India’s Defence Problem*, p. 155).

According to D. R. Mankekar, Nehru addressed a secret memorandum to the External Affairs Ministry, Defence Ministry

and Home Ministry on the Sino-Indian border question in July 1954. "In this memorandum Nehru described the Agreement as the new starting point of our relations with China and Tibet and affirmed that both as flowing from our policy and as a consequence of our Agreement with China, the Northern frontier should be considered a firm and definite one, which was not open to discussion with anybody. The Prime Minister directed that a system of check-posts should be spread along this entire frontier, more specially in such places as might be considered." Along with this memorandum was issued a new version of Survey of India maps showing the whole northern frontier as clearly defined replacing the old official maps (e.g. *The Political Map of India 1950*: Scale 1 inch = 70 miles), which showed the northern frontier extending from the north-west end of Kashmir to Nepal as 'undefined', and the McMahon Line as 'undemarcated'.

1954-1959

Before July 1954, there were only a few trouble spots on India's northern frontier. We have already referred to the exchange of several notes between the Nationalist Government of China and the Government of India during the period from 1944 to 1949. These Notes arose out of the Government of India's efforts to push its check-posts in the North-east frontier region from the foothills of Assam towards the vicinity of the McMahon Line. But since the establishment of the People's Republic of China in October 1949, no issues were raised by the Government of China over the persistent efforts of the Government of India to bring the tribal peoples under the control of the North-eastern Frontier Agency set up in 1950 under the Constitution of the Indian Republic. In the central sector, there was a recurrence of an old dispute in 1951 and 1953 in the Tehri-Garhwal region near Gungum Nallah. In 1926, a Boundary Commission consisting of the representatives of Tibet, Tehri-Garhwal and the Government of India met at Nilang, but no agreement could be reached since then. There were no disputes in the Kashmir sector, though one of

the Chinese armies which marched into Tibet in the fall of 1950 travelled by the Aksai Chin route from Sinkiang to Western Tibet. This is corroborated by Hugh Richardson in his book, *Tibet and Its History*, (p. 229). "A report on the the presence of Chinese troops in West Tibet and their advance from Sinkiang province was contained in an official despatch from the Government of India's Agent at Gartok, Mr. Garpon Marlampa." (*The Statesman*, November 15, 1950). According to S. S. Khera, "Information about the activities of the Chinese on the Indo-Tibetan border, particularly on the Aksai Chin region, had begun to come in by about 1952 or even earlier. Subsequent events have shown that much of this activity was connected with the opening up of the road through the Aksai Chin region of Ladakh, and along the South Tibetan border towards Central Tibet and Lhasa.... However, no great significance appears to have been attached to the earliest reports of these movements from China into the Western Tibet. But by about 1952, and in any case well before the 1954 Agreement, the developments had become too obvious to be ignored." (*India's Defence Problem*, p. 157). Until June 1954, the current Survey of India maps showed the northern as well as eastern boundary of Kashmir as undefined. Also, the future of Kashmir was still uncertain, India being committed to the verdict of an internationally supervised plebiscite, subject to the prior withdrawal of Pakistani armed personnel from its territory. These seem to be the real reasons why the Government of India kept silent for several years, even though they knew about the Chinese presence in the Aksai Chin region. Also they knew that the Head Lama of Ladakh, Kushuk-Bakola had warned in June 1952, that Ladakh might seek political union with Tibet "as a last course left to us." (Vide *The Danger in Kashmir* : Josef Korbel, Revised edition, pp. 230, 231 and 233).

From the study of the White Papers published by the Government of India, we find that from July 1954 to July 1958, the protest Notes of the Government of China and India were concerned with small areas of dispute such as Barahoti, Damzan (both south of the Niti Pass), the Nilang area in Tehri-Garhwal and Shipki Pass in the central sector. These disputes arose just

after the signing of the Panch Sheel Agreement over Tibet because of several reasons. In the central sector, the Indo-Tibetan Border Force under the Home Ministry set up new check-posts in the previously disputed areas in accordance with the secret memorandum issued by Nehru in July 1954. The Chinese, on the other hand, were taking up a survey of the border region in this sector for the first time, and as the new overlords of Tibet, they were prone to support Tibetan irredentist claims in respect of the boundary. But these disputes did not form a part of the conversations between Nehru and Chou-En-lai during the visits of the Chinese Premier to India in the winter of 1956-1957. They talked only about the North-eastern section of the Indian frontier. Nehru had discussed the Burma border in a recent letter to Chou En-lai in 1956, presumably because he thought that a satisfactory solution of Burma's northern border on the basis of the McMahon Line would strengthen India's position about the remaining section of the Line. Nehru got the impression that while Chou did not approve of this border being called the McMahon Line, he had accepted the McMahon Line border with Burma, and whatever might have happened long ago, he proposed to accept this border with India also, after due consultation with the authorities of the Tibet region "in consideration of the friendly relations between India and China". Nehru did not raise the issue of the Kashmir border. (At a Press conference in Calcutta on December 9, 1956, Prime Minister Chou En-lai characterised the Kashmir question as 'an outstanding issue between India and Pakistan').

On August 21, 1958, the Government of India sent a protest Note to Counsellor of China in India on the publication of a map of China in *The China Pictorial* (July, 1958) on the ground of inaccuracies in the delineation of the Sino-Indian borders. In this Note, for the first time objection was taken by the Government of India over large areas of Ladakh, a part of the Kashmir territory, disputed between India and Pakistan, being shown as Chinese territory. Before this, there was another minor dispute in regard to the Ladakh region of Kashmir. On July 2, 1958, a *Note Verbale* was handed by the Ministry of External Affairs to the Chinese Counsellor in India about the occupation of Khurnak

fort in Eastern Ladakh by the Chinese troops. On October 18, 1958, the Foreign Secretary of the Government of India handed over to the Chinese Ambassador an informal Note protesting that the Chinese should have constructed a part of the Yehcheng-Gartok road "through indisputably Indian territory without first obtaining the permission of the Government of India and without even informing the Government of India". This letter also made an enquiry about an Army patrol of 15 people and 34 ponies which were out "on normal Patrol" in this area and did not return. The Foreign Secretary referred to these incidents as "petty frontier disputes." On November 8, 1958, the Note submitted by the Indian Ambassador to the Chinese Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs said, *inter alia*, "It is now clear that the Chinese also claim this area as their territory. The question whether a particular area is Indian or Chinese territory is a matter in dispute which has to be dealt with separately." But Prime Minister Nehru's letter of December 14, 1958 to Premier Chou En-lai, which mainly dealt with the border between India and China did not make any reference to the Ladakh, i. e., Kashmir section of the frontier. This seems to imply that the letter of the Foreign Secretary, dated October 18, 1958, was issued mainly to secure the information and the release of the Army personnel who had been sent to explore the exact location of the Sinkiang-Tibet highway and had been arrested by the Chinese at Haji Langar in the Summer of 1958.

According to the I.B. Chief, B. N. Mullick, "...enough information was available about the construction of the road right from 1951 to 1957, when the road was formally declared openAll through these years no questions were raised by the Army Headquarters or the Ministry of External Affairs about this road. It was only after the road had been completed and heavy traffic had started plying that some attention was turned on it though even then.....it was only considered to be of nuisance value and not one that affected our security". (*My Years with Nehru*, p. 199).

The first Director of the Historical Division, Ministry of External Affairs, K. Zachariah informed the North and North-

East Border Committee that during the days of the British Raj, the Government of India maps showed consistently a definite alignment only in the North-West corner of Kashmir, viz. the Gilgit region facing the border of the Russian Empire just beyond the narrow strip of Afgan territory known as Wakhan corridor. There were in the main three conceptions of the North and North-Eastern boundary of Kashmir put forward by British officials and cartographers and explorers at different times :

(1) There was the John Ardagh Line showing a boundary alignment which took the crest of the Kuenlun range and enclosed within the British territory the upper reaches of the Yarkand river and its tributaries and the Karakash river as well as the whole of the Aksai Chin plateau. (This was a strategic adaptation of the Johnson boundary of 1865).

(2) There was the Macartney-Macdonald line (1899), which put forth a less ambitious claim of territory north of the Karakoram range. East of the Karakoram Pass, it left to China the whole of the Karakash Valley and almost all of Aksai Chin proper. It followed the Lak Tsang range which left on the Indian side the Lingzi Tang salt plains and the whole of the Chang Chenmo Valley, as well as the Chip Chap river further north.

(3) Then there was the Karakoram Line, which was based on the watershed principle. (The Map of India attached to the *Report of The Indian Statutory Commission*, Volume I, shows the Karakoram alignment depicting the North and North-east boundary of Kashmir).

Scanning the Survey of India maps during the last decade before independence, we find that the Map of India (showing Provinces, States and Districts : scale 1 inch to 70 miles) published in 1938 failed to show any boundary line or colour difference along the wide region between Kashmir and Sinkiang Tibet. Since 1945, however, though the North and Eastern boundary of Kashmir were shown as 'Undefined,' an attempt was made by means of a colour-wash to convey a vague idea of the North and Eastern boundaries of Kashmir, more or less in conformity with the Ardagh line in the region east of the Karakoram Pass. (This change was made apparently at the initiative of Olaf Caroe, who

was then the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India. This practice was followed in regard to Maps showing the North and Eastern boundaries of Kashmir, which were current till June 1954).

CLAIM BY ERASURE

In the new map of India issued in July 1954, the words 'Boundary Undefined' were erased, and by this simple process the Survey of India maps laid claim to a boundary alignment of Kashmir east of the Karakoram Pass akin to the John Ardagh Line, including the whole of Aksai Chin and reaching the Kuenlun Mountain in the north-east. Though in his circular of July 1954 to the Ministries of External Affairs, Home and Defence, Nehru ruled that "the northern border should be considered a firm and definite one which was not open to discussion with anybody," no action was taken to push the check-posts to the forward areas in the Kashmir sector, as was done in the middle and eastern section of the Northern boundary. Regarding the setting up of check-posts in the Aksai region, "The Army's attitude was that they could send an occasional patrol but they were in no position to open and hold any posts in this area...it would be difficult to oust the Chinese from this region. In any case, the army was in no position to make that effort because of the limited resources available at Leh and of the non-existence of any road communication from Leh to these parts." (B. N. Mullik : *My Years with Nehru*, p. 201).

It appears that the Government of India's unilateral decision in July to issue new maps of India with a well defined Northern boundary incorporating a version of the John Ardagh Line in the Kashmir sector east of the Karakoram Pass was primarily meant to provide a bargaining counter in boundary negotiations with China, which were inevitable at some future date. It is significant that even in August-September 1959, when Nehru had to face an angry Parliament in the context of the concurrent leakage about the border clash at Longju and the construction

of the Chinese highway through Aksai Chin, Nehru maintained a pliant attitude about the exact location of the frontier in the Ladakh region while asserting a firm claim about the McMahon Line all along. On August 28, 1959, Nehru said, "This was the boundary of the old Kashmir state with Tibet and Chinese Turkestan. Nobody had marked it... But after some kind of broad surveys, the then Government had laid down that border which we have been accepting...Aksai Chin area is an area about some parts of which ... it is not quite clear what the position is." On August 31, 1959, Nehru said, "The position in Ladakh is different from the position in the North-Eastern Frontier Agency ... the Ladakh border was for these long years under the Jammu and Kashmir State and nobody knew exactly what was happening there although some British officers went a hundred years ago and drew a line and the Chinese did not accept that line. The matter is clearly one for consideration and debate ..." Nehru spoke in the same vein about the border of Ladakh in Parliament on September 10 and September 12.

NEHRU'S DIRECTIVE DISREGARDED

Neville Maxwell quoted an official directive issued by Nehru on September 13, 1959, which also reveals his desire for a compromise settlement in the Ladakh sector of the boundary: "... (d) The Aksai Chin area has to be left more or less as it is as we have no check-posts there and practically little of access. Any question in relation to it can only be considered when the time arises in the context of the larger question of the entire border. For the present, we have to put up with the Chinese occupation of this north-eastern sector (of Ladakh) and their road across it ..." (*India's China War*, p. 130).

In the original resolution of the Working Committee of the Congress Party, drafted on September 25, 1959 for the A.I.C.C. session held in Chandigarh (September 25-28), there was a reference to "the recent developments on the North-East frontier of India" only, there being no specific reference to the Ladakh region.

This was objected to by many members of the A.I.C. C. and the resolution was suitably amended. From this report published in *The Hindu*, September 28, 1959, we can presume that the Congress High Command also was not sure about the Indian claim on Aksai Chin.

In spite of Nehru's directive of September 13, prohibiting further movement in the Ladakh region, the Indo-Tibetan border force under the Home Ministry was involved in a clash with the Chinese border force near the Kongka Pass on October 21, 1959, in which nine Indian policemen lost their lives. This incident marked a critical point in the Sino-Indian frontier dispute, which hamstringed Indian diplomacy by rousing public anger to a boiling point. On October 23, 1959, the Ministry of External Affairs submitted a Note to the Chinese Ambassador in New Delhi protesting against the "sudden and aggressive firing by Chinese forces in the region of the Kongka Pass" and "intrusion by Chinese troops into an area which is part of Indian territory". This Note claimed that this area was about 40 to 50 miles west of the traditional Sino-Indian frontier which had been shown in official Indian maps. However, from the testimony of Karam Singh, the Commander of the Indo-Tibetan border forces which clashed with the Chinese patrols near the Kongka Pass, it appears that one Sharma, Deputy Director in the Ministry of Home Affairs, gave him instructions to establish new check-posts in forward areas in Ladakh on September 22, 1959. (*Vide White Paper III*, p. 14). This shows that some officials of the Home Ministry and its underlings, such as the Indo-Tibetan border force as well as the Intelligence Bureau, were non-chalantly flouting the directive of Nehru, dated September 13, 1959, prohibiting forward movements of patrols in the Ladakh sector, and that led to the critical Kongka Pass incident of October 21, 1959. B. N. Mullik writes, "On October 23, when the facts of the outrage came to be known, the Prime Minister held a meeting which was attended by the Defence Minister, the Chief of the Army Staff and officers from the Ministries of External Affairs, Home and Defence. ...The Intelligence Bureau was made the common target by the Army Headquarters and the External Affairs Ministry and accused

of expansionism and causing provocation on the frontier.... The Army demanded that no further movements of armed police should take place on the frontier without their clearance ...the Prime Minister had to give in to the Army's demand. The result was that the protection of the border was thereafter handed over to the Army and all operations of armed police were made subject to prior approval of the Army command..." (*My Years with Nehru*, pp. 243-44). Thus we have B. N. Mullik's own testimony to show that while the Government of India publicly accused China of 'unprovoked aggression' at the Kongka Pass, within the inner conclave of the Government the blame for provocation and 'aggression' was squarely laid on the Intelligence Bureau.

RIGID ATTITUDE

It was after November 1959 that Nehru took a rigid attitude about India's border claims in the Kashmir sector. The Note of the Ministry of External Affairs to the Embassy of China, dated November 4, 1959, described in detail for the first time the boundary claimed by the Government, specially in the section eastward from the Karakoram pass. "From the Karakoram Pass the boundary proceeds north-east *via* Qara Tagh Pass and then follows the Kuenlun range from a point 15 miles north of Haji Langar to Peak 21250 (Survey of India Map) which lies east of Longitude 80 east". This Note also made a strange assertion that "This line constitutes the watershed between the Indus system in India and the Khotan system in China", while according to authoritative opinion, the Karakoram Mountains, which extend south-east of the Karakoram Pass, from the watershed between the Indus system and the Khotan system. The famous Swedish explorer Dr. Sven Hedin, Prof. Owen Lattimore, *The Imperial Gazetteer*, Volume XV (1908), *The Chambers Gazetteer* (1962) and *The Columbia Encyclopedia* (1963), all agree on the Karakoram Mountains as the main water divide in this region. In early November 1959, the Historical Division of the External Affairs Ministry produced a Note on *The Historical Background of the Himalayan Frontier of India*. It

was asserted therein that "India's northern frontier has lain where it now runs for nearly three thousand years. The areas along this frontier, which is nearly 2,500 miles long from the Kuenlun Mountains in the far north to the junction with Burma in the east, have always been a part of India." This Note also asserted the sacrosanct nature of the northern frontier saying, "This Northern frontier of India is for much of its length the crest of the Himalayan ranges. The Himalayas have always dominated Indian life, just as they have dominated the Indian landscape." The well known Indian columnist 'Waqnis' rightly condemned this document for 'wrong statement of facts and illogical references' and said, "...I do wish that this essay into history assisted by cruches of impressive statements had not been made". (*The Statesman*, November 23, 1959). This document, however, served to add fuel to the fire of national passions and prejudices in the context of the Kongka Pass incidents, as the true nature and origin of the conflict remained unrevealed to the Indian public. In early November 1959, Nehru sent a secret memorandum to key Ambassadors abroad which said *inter alia* : "He is convinced now that China in the present dispute is only after territorial gains from India and not interested in a settlement based on *traditional frontiers* : therefore he does not see much chance of a reasonable negotiated settlement of the dispute". (*The Hindu*, November 13, 1959). According to Neville Maxwell, this sea-change in Nehru's thinking about India's traditional claim to India's frontiers was very much influenced by Dr. S. Gopal, Director, Historical Division, External Affairs Ministry, who had been sent to London to go through the material on India's borders in the India Office and Foreign Office archives and build up objective historical evidence. "In November 1959 Gopal told Nehru that India's claim to the Aksai Chin area was clearly stronger than China's". (*India's China War*, p. 119). What sort of historical evidence, Gopal dug up in London, which would establish Indian claims over the Aksai Chin area, still remains a mystery. No such document is available in the archives of the India Office Library and Records.

The Historical Division of the External Affairs Ministry must also be held responsible for Nehru's misquoting of the 1899 boun-

dary proposals which the British Minister in Peking, Sir Claude MacDonald, made to the Tsungli Yamen (Chinese Foreign Office). In his letter to Prime Minister Chou En-lai, Nehru said, *inter alia*, "The proposal made by the British Government referred not to the Eastern Frontier of Ladakh with Tibet but to the Northern Frontier of Ladakh and Kashmir with Sinkiang. It was stated in that context that the northern boundary ran along the Kuenlun range to a point of 80° east longitude, where it met the eastern boundary of Ladakh". The relevant portion of the actual document of 1899 says, that the proposed boundary is to follow "the Lak Tsung Range until that meets the spur running south from the K'un-lun range, which has been shown in our maps as the eastern boundary of Ladakh. This is a little east of 80° east longitude". (Quoted by Alastair Lamb, *The China-India Border*, p. 182). This is another example to show how Nehru was ill-served by the Historical Division of the External Affairs Ministry in tackling the Sino-Indian frontier dispute on a rational basis. (By the textual alteration, the Macartney-MacDonald line was misrepresented to include the whole of the Aksai Chin area within the Indian boundary).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

From the statements of Nehru in Parliament as well as his letters to Premier Chou En-lai in 1958-59, it appears that regarding the claim to the McMahon Line, he was completely relying on the information given in the official publication of the British Government of India, *viz.*, *Collection of Engagements, Treaties and Sanads*, published under the authority of the Foreign and Political Department : Volume XIV, more widely known by the name of its first editor as *Aitchison's Treaties* relating to Tibet. This volume, carrying the date of imprint 1929, was supposed to have given the official version of the results of the Tripartite Simla Conference held between Britain, China and Tibet in 1913-14. This publication convinced Nehru, Krishna Menon, G. S. Bajpai and S. Dutt, who served as Foreign Secretary during 1954-1961, as also most other key officials in the External Affairs Ministry that the

Simla Convention of July 1914 was concerned with the fixation of both the Sino-Tibetan border and the Indo-Tibetan border. After initialling the agreement, the Chinese delegate did fail to put in his full signature and withdrew from the Conference by way of dissent after lodging a protest in respect of the Sino-Tibetan boundary. But since the Chinese did not raise an issue in regard to the Indo-Tibetan boundary fixed along the main axis of the Himalayas, and since India and Tibet ratified the Simla Convention by means of declaration accepting its terms as binding as between themselves, the Indo-Tibetan boundary (later known as the McMahon Line) should be regarded as being legally valid since July 1914.

Recent researches in the records of the India Office, London, have revealed that the Simla Conference (1913-1914) was concerned with the fixation of only the Sino-Tibetan boundary. Henry McMahon's Memorandum with regard to the North-east frontier of India did not even carry the endorsement of the then Government of India. Also the Government of India regarded the Simla Convention as abortive due to the Chinese refusal to ratify the agreement. Due to the prohibitory clauses of the Anglo-Russian Convention, the Government of India was legally debarred from signing a bilateral agreement with Tibet, which was under the suzerainty of China. Recent researches in the records of the India Office, London, have also revealed that volume (XIV) of the *Aitchison's Treaties* relating to Tibet, on which the Government of India was relying for authentic information in regard to the Simla Convention was a spurious document published in 1938 with the imprint of 1929, while the original version was withdrawn from circulation. The issue of the spurious version of the *Aitchison's Treaties* relating to Tibet asserting the McMahon Line as a legally valid boundary in 1938 also coincided with the issue of new maps by the Survey of India for the first time showing the North-eastern boundary along the main Himalayan axis cancelling the old maps, which showed the Assam boundary along the foothills of the Himalayas. These devices were adopted by the Department of External Affairs, New Delhi mainly on the initiative of Olaf Caroe, then a Deputy Secretary. Their main purpose

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was to reopen the issue of the North-eastern boundary with the Tibetan Government, which had ignored the secret boundary agreement with the British all these years with impunity and shown reluctance to accept its validity without a *quid pro quo* in the fulfilment of the Tibetan boundary claims *vis-a-vis* China. But Olaf Caroe's persistent efforts to make the Tibetan Government agree to the McMahon Line proved to be infructuous, as is revealed in the reports of the British emissaries to Lhasa (Basil Gould, Rai Bahadur Norbu, and A. J. Hopkinson), available in the India Office records. Thus, free India was left with a difficult legacy in regard to the North-east frontier. In 1943, the Government of India made an indirect effort to endow the Simla Convention with *ex post facto* legality by trying to secure American recognition of Tibet's *de facto* independence beneath "formal Chinese suzerainty". They specifically urged the U.S.A. to recognise Tibet's right "to exchange diplomatic representatives with other powers". But the U.S.A. rejected the proposal on the ground that they regarded Tibet among the areas constituting the Republic of China. (See author's article on "The McMahon Line, 1914-1915" in *The China Quarterly*, July-September 1971).

TAKE-OVER OF TAWANG

From the geographic point of view, however, the McMahon Line may be regarded as a natural border between India and China, as it represents approximately the crest line of the Himalayas. And the External Affairs Ministry, under the able guidance of its Foreign Secretary K.P.S. Menon, made vigorous effort to push the Indian administration in the NEFA area. Though the Chinese maps showed the boundary in this region along the foot-hills of Assam, the Chinese Government had no direct claim to any part of the NEFA area. Also, by virtue of their suzerainty over Tibet, the Chinese could advance their claim only to Walong and Tawang in this region. According to Alastair Lamb, "Apart from its inclusion within India of Tawang and Walong, the McMahon Line conflicted surprisingly little with Tibetan concepts

as to their sphere of influence". (*The China-India Border*, p. 151). Tawang was a part of the Tsona district in Tibet and hundreds of monks in its great monastery were closely connected to the Drepung Monastery in Lhasa which was a major force in Tibetan politics. On the other hand, the Tawang region was of special strategic importance to India lying along the eastern boundary of Bhutan. Also through the Tawang tract, which extended from the Tibetan plateau right down to the Assam plains just north of Udalgiri, ran an important trade route between India and Tibet. The Government of India under the British Raj had taken Walong in 1943 and was trying to push the administration in tribal territories north of the foothills gradually. But they more or less gave up the project of pushing the administration upto the McMahon Line in the Tawang Tract, because of its incompatibility with their overall objective of drawing Tibet into the British sphere of influence and bolstering up Tibet as a friendly 'buffer state' against China. But Nehru and his intimate advisers on foreign policy, such as K. M. Panikkar, the first Indian Ambassador to the People's Republic of China, come to the conclusion that "the British policy [which we were supposed to have inherited] of looking upon Tibet as an area in which we had special political interests could not be maintained". (K. M. Panikkar, *In To Chinas*, p. 102). So unlike the British, free India was in a better position to take over the Tawang tract by force from the Tibetan Government, provided such action did not lead to Chinese intervention in the matter. It is to the credit of the External Affairs Ministry under the Secretaryship of K. P. S. Menon that the taking over of Tawang was planned in January-February 1951, when China was locked in grim battle in Korea with the American forces under the U.N. flag and when there was a complete deadlock in Sino-Tibetan relation. The friendly attitude taken by India in regard to Communist China's claim to occupy the seat of China as a permanent member of the Security Council in preference to the Taiwan Government, as also India's recognition of the vital interest of China in the security of North Korea, together with India's disavowal of political interests in Tibet had created an atmosphere of close

understanding between India and China at that period. And so free India was able to accomplish the incorporation of the Tawang tract, which was of vital strategic importance to her without a murmur from the Government of China. Of course, many areas of the North-east Frontier Agency remained unoccupied and unadministered till 1959 and even later, because of the inaccessibility of the terrain and the difficulty of dealing with some of the wild tribes—living in the Hobbesian state of nature, owing no allegiance to any political authority. This was specially true of the Subansiri region, where members of the Thagin tribe murdered 73 Assam Rifles personnel in the winter season towards the end of 1953. Anyway, there was no protest from the Chinese side since 1950 upto the Tibetan uprising in March 1959 about the extension of the Indian Administration above the foothills of Assam, which was in contrast to the attitude of the Nationalist Government of China during 1946-1949.

Conflict between India and China over the control of certain peripheral areas along the McMahon Line arose only in the wake of the Tibetan revolt. On December 15, 1959 Nehru in a television interview with the veteran American journalist A. T. Steele gave a frank explanation of the cause of the sudden crisis, which had cropped up along the northern frontier in recent months. He said that the revolt in Tibet “rather brought a certain speed in the events on our borders because the revolt in Tibet was being crushed by the Chinese forces and they naturally came to our borders where the fighting was on the other side. Tibetan refugees were coming in. They wanted to stop them, so they came to our border and a somewhat new situation arose for us in the last few months... It was rather a succession of events which brought this conflict about”. A. S. Whiting wrote in 1963, “Had Tibet not erupted in revolt, no shooting might have occurred between the Indians and the Chinese. Instead, Peking probably would have continued to press quietly for its interpretation of the frontier”. (A. S. Whiting, *Communist China in The Liberal Papers*, edited by James Roosevelt, p. 298). Alastair Lamb also finds the clue to the Sino-Indian border dispute in the Tibetan revolt in March 1959, “Had it not been for the dramatic circumstances of the Tibetan revolt,

this conflict of opinion (between India and China) would probably have given rise to little more than a continued exchange of notes". (*Indo-Tibetan Border, Australian Journal of Politics and History*, May, 1960.)

Anyway, if the Indian border-claims were limited to the Chinese recognition of the McMahon Line, it would not have resulted in an imbroglio causing a costly confrontation along the extensive border stretching from Ladkh to NEFA for the last 14 years. It is now definitely known from the testimony of K. P. S. Menon that when Chou En-lai visited India in April 1960, he offered a formula for the settlement of Sino-Indian frontier dispute, "under which the Chinese Government would recognise the McMahon Line once and for all in return for some recognition on our part of Chinese claims in the disputed Aksai Chin area." (*Twilight in China*, p. 260). Chou En-lai's statement at the press conference in New Delhi on April 25, 1960 made it clear that the border dispute in the Central sector was of no significance to him implying his readiness to accept Indian claims in this sector also, as a part of the overall settlement of the boundary problem which would involve Indian recognition of the Chinese claims in the Aksai Chin area ensuring the security of the Sinkiang-Tibet highway.

MISINFORMED BY HISTORICAL DIVISION

K. P. S. Menon has been the most knowledgeable person among the Indian diplomats since the days of the British Raj and he was speaking with unchallengeable authority when he made the following remarks in his address at the Convocation of Indian School of International Studies, New Delhi, on December 13, 1969 referring to Chou En-lai's offer to recognise the McMahon Line in lieu of Indian recognition of Chinese claims in the 'disputed' Aksai Chin area. "I deliberately say 'disputed' because maps, treaties, agreements, and other documents on which both sides rely cannot be said to place the boundary as conceived by either party, beyond the region of doubt or the

need for negotiation. The watershed principle, on which we have heavily relied in other sectors of the frontier, is in the Aksai Chin area not in our favour. Moreover, it cannot be forgotten that Aksai Chin is of no importance to India, whereas, to China, it is of the utmost importance because it is the link between two historically troublesome regions, Tibet and Sinkiang". (*The Sixties in Retrospect*, page 12). The disputed nature of the Aksai region, as we know, was admitted by Nehru himself in several speeches in Parliament in August-September 1959. The official Note submitted by the Indian Ambassador G. Parthasarathi to the Chinese Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs in Peking on November 8, 1958 includes the following reference to the Aksai Chin area: "It is now clear that the Chinese Government also claim this area as their territory. The question whether a particular area is Indian or Chinese territory is a matter in dispute". (*White Paper 1954-1959*, p. 29). This was also a recognition of the disputed nature of the Aksai Chin area.

But as we have seen, the Historical Division of the Indian External Affairs Ministry misinformed our Government about the true legacy of the British Raj in regard to our broader claims in the Western sector. In the case of Eastern sector also, they failed to do homework and find out the spurious nature of the *Aitchison's Treaties* (Volume XIV, 1929) relating to Tibet, which Olaf Caroe fabricated in 1938 to falsely assert that the Simla Convention covered both the Sino-Tibetan and the Sino-Indian boundaries and to confirm that the McMahon Line was a legal boundary. [If they had simply cared to look into the *Aitchison's Treaties* (Volume XII), 1931, relating to Assam, (p. 100), they would have seen that the Tawang tract in at least its northern reaches was under the Tibetan administration during the days of the British Raj]. In the case of the Western sector, they completely ignored the *Aitchison's Treaties* relating to Kashmir (Volume XII, Part I, p. 5, 1931), which says, "The northern as well as the eastern boundary of the Kashmir State is still undefined". The way in which the Historical Division of the External Affairs Ministry twisted the content of the letter of March 14, 1899, written by the British Minister in Peking C. M. MacDonald to the Minister

of the Tsungli Yamen (Chinese Foreign Office) giving the boundary proposal for Kashmir—later known as the Macartney-MacDonald line—was disingenous. (This important document relating to the Indian border claims in the Kashmir sector was misquoted in the following important official communication made by the Government of India during 1959-1961 : (1) Nehru's letter to Chou En-lai, dated September 26, 1959 ; (2) Letter to the Editor, *The Times* (London), entitled *China-India Border Dispute* written by M. A. Husain, Acting High Commissioner for India published on November 27, 1959 ; (3) *Report of The Officials of the Governments of India and The People's Republic of China on the Boundary Questions* (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, February 1961), p. 55 of the Report of the Indian Officials.

The Historical Division of the External Affairs Ministry also appears to be responsible for the misrepresentation that the adaptation of the John Ardagh Line east of the Karakoram Pass—as shown in the Survey of India maps since July 1954, represents the watershed between the Indus system in India and the Khotan system in China. If the officials concerned had done their homework, they would have noticed that in *The Imperial Gazetteer of India* (1908), Volume XV, p. 84, there is the following quotation about the watershed in that region : “The Karakoram range is of a far more complicated character. Broadly speaking, it is a continuation of the Hindukush, and forms the watershed between the Central Asian drainage and the streams flowing into the Indian Ocean.”

The negative role of the Historical Division of the External Affairs Ministry in keeping the Government of India and the public completely misinformed as to the true border legacy has been a major cause of the continued stalemate over the issue of the Sino-Indian frontier. Ramsay Muir's dictum, “Bureaucracy is like fire—invaluable as a servant, ruinous when it becomes a master”, is applicable to the officials of the Historical Division of our External Affairs Ministry, as they were able to hamstring Nehru's original diplomacy of working for a *modus vivendi* with China and solving the boundary problem on a compromise basis.

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An official decision to keep the records of the External Affairs Ministry dealing with the Sino-Indian Frontier from 1914 to June 1954 out of bounds for independent scholars has helped them to maintain till today a curtain of ignorance on the true border legacy of the British Raj and the history of Sino-Indian frontier still remains hidden to most of us.

3

DISTORTIONS IN THE HISTORY OF SINO-INDIAN FRONTIERS

Distortion of history, suppression of facts, and withholding of official documents relating to the frontier from independent historians have been as much responsible for the aggravation of the Sino-Indian border conflict as the deliberate and even official incitement of 'nationalistic' emotions in India.

This article attempts to expose some of these official distortions to which both imperial considerations of the British Indian government and the 'nationalistic' aspirations of the government of free India appear to have contributed. It calls for a close scrutiny of the role of the Historical Division of the External Affairs Ministry in the perpetuation and strengthening of the myths that surround the border dispute between India and China.

The Sino-Indian border dispute has been one of the most tragic events in recent history, involving more than one-third of humanity. Though the border war in October-November 1962 was a short-lived affair, its after-effects have been far-reaching. It has entailed heavy expenditure on arms which Indian people cannot afford; in China too, it has caused further diversion of scarce resources. From time to time since 1969, there have been overtures from the Chinese side to the Government of India for a reconciliation; but upto now there has been little progress in this regard.

The rock on which the Sino-Indian *entente* of the early 1950s was wrecked was the border dispute, which came into the open for the first time in August 1959. A careful study of the boundary dispute shows that distortion of records and the resultant ignorance of vital facts about our border legacy from the British Raj at the highest level happened to be an important factor contributing to this impasse.

This becomes clear when we study the notes exchanged between:

Prime Minister Nehru and Premier Chou En-lai (Zhou Enlai) on the Eastern Sector of the border question beginning from December 1958.

THE EASTERN SECTOR AND SIMLA CONFERENCE

Neither Nehru nor Chou En-lai seemed to have any knowledge of the mystery surrounding the origin of the McMahon Line. In the letter of Nehru to Chou on December 14, 1958, we find the following confidential minute: "Premier Chou referred to the McMahon Line and again said he had never heard of this before though of course the then Chinese government had dealt with this matter and not accepted the line. He had gone into this matter in connection with the border dispute with Burma. Although he thought that this line, established by British Imperialists, was not fair, nevertheless, (1) because it was an accomplished fact and (2) because it was of the friendly relations which existed between China and the countries concerned, namely India and Burma, the Chinese government were of the opinion that they should give recognition to the McMahon Line; (3) they had however, not consulted the Tibetan authorities about it yet. They proposed to do so".¹

The fact is that the McMahon Line was not dealt with in the Simla Conference (which had been called to fix the Sino-Tibetan boundary). The India office records indicate that the British Cabinet as well as the Chinese government were kept in the dark about McMahon's attempts to negotiate a new boundary with Tibetans. On July 23, 1914, the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, in forwarding a copy of the Final Memorandum of the British Plenipotentiary to the Tibet Conference to the Secretary of State, London, wrote: "We recognise that a consideration of the eastern or Indo-Chinese portion of the North-East Frontier did not form part of the functions of the Conference." Volume XIV of the *Aitchison Treaties* (1929), has this to say about Simla Conference: "In 1913 a conference of Tibetan, Chinese and British Plenipotentiaries met in India to try and bring about a settlement with

regards to matters on the *Sino-Tibetan frontier* and a tripartite convention was drawn up and initialled in 1914. The Chinese government, however, refused to permit their plenipotentiary to proceed to full signature.”²

So it would be clear from the British official records that the North-east boundary was not dealt with in the Tripartite Simla Conference of 1913-14 and that Chou En-lai was ignorant about the matter in 1956-57.

There is evidence to indicate that Nehru was also ignorant about the true purport of the Simla Conference. In the first statement in the Indian Parliament on this question (February 8, 1950) Nehru said : “In the early years of this century, a convention was held between the representatives of the then Government of India and Tibet and of China and at this certain decisions were arrived at. Roughly speaking, the decisions were about the boundary of Tibet and India called the McMahon Line, that Tibet should be treated as an autonomous country, and subject to China agreeing to this, some kind of Chinese sovereignty should be acknowledged. This was agreed to by them. But later the then Government of China did not accept this agreement and therefore, did not sign it. In fact, although this agreement has been acted upon in India and Tibet, there has been no formal signature to it by the Chinese government.” Thus Nehru also entertained the illusion that the McMahon Line was the product of the tripartite Simla Conference (1913-14). Nehru’s ignorance about the true origin of the McMahon Line also becomes clear from his letter to Chou En-lai, dated March 22, 1959 : “This (McMahon) line was in fact drawn at a tripartite Conference held at Simla in 1913-14 between the plenipotentiaries of the Governments of China, Tibet and India...although the Chinese Plenipotentiary at the Conference objected to the boundaries between Inner and Outer Tibet and between Tibet and China, there is no mention of any Chinese reservation in respect of the India-Tibet frontier either during the discussions or at the time of initialling the Convention.”³

Chou En-lai’s letter to Nehru (January 23, 1959) includes the following comment : “‘The ‘McMahon Line’ was a product of the British policy of aggression against the Tibet Region of China.

and aroused great indignation of the Chinese people.”⁴ In fact, the Chinese Government first sent their series of protest notes on the issue of the McMahon Line as late as 1946-47, 32 years after the initialling of the Simla Convention. This shows that even in January 1959, Chou En-lai was unaware of the facts relating to this Convention.

It was only after the suppression of the Tibetan uprising in March 1959 and the flight of the Dalai Lama from Lhasa that the Chinese Army captured the Potala palace and the Chinese officials started probing into the voluminous files relating to the clandestine diplomacy between Tibet and the British Government of India since 1913-14 to 1950, in contravention of the Anglo-Chinese Convention (1906), the Anglo-Russian Convention (1907), as also the Nine Power Treaty signed in Washington in 1922, in all of which the signatories implicitly recognised Tibet as a vassal state of China.

When Chou En-lai replied to Nethru's letter of March 22, 1959 about six months later on September 8, 1959, he had already been informed by his officials most of the facts about the origin of the McMahon Line on the basis of Tibetan official records. Chou wrote : “At the Conference were discussed the so-called boundary between Outer and Inner Tibet and that between Tibet and rest of China. Contrary to what was said in your letter, the so-called McMahon Line was never discussed at the Simla Conference, but was determined by the British representative and the representative of the Tibet local authorities behind the back of the representative of the Chinese Central government through an exchange of secret notes at Delhi on March 24, 1914, that is, prior to the signing of the Simla Treaty. This line was later marked on the map attached to the Simla Treaty as part of the boundary between Tibet and the rest of China.”⁵

Nehru however, seemed not to have been properly informed till then about the secret proceedings of the Simla Conference. This is clear from the following points raised in his letter to Chou En-lai, dated September 26, 1959 : “Looking into the old papers, we find that the British government withheld the publication of the Simla Convention for several years in the hope that there

would be an agreement about the status and boundary of Inner Tibet. The Simla Convention was published in the 1929 edition of *Aitchison's Treaties* and the McMahon Line was shown in official maps from 1937 onwards. These maps were circulated widely but neither then nor subsequently was any objection raised by the Chinese authorities".⁶ Nehru also stressed in this letter that the McMahon Line represented the customary boundary in this area as well as the natural frontier, being 'water-parting'.⁷ On these points also, he was misinformed.

How did such confusion originate in the minds of the Indian Prime Minister as well as high officials in the Foreign Office? In 1924, Sir Charles Bell, who was an aide to Sir Henry McMahon during the Simla Conference, published his book, *Tibet: Past and Present*. In this, he distorted the history of the Simla Conference and asserted: "The opportunity was also taken (at Simla) to negotiate the frontier to be established between Tibet and North-Eastern India... (and) it proved fortunately possible to establish (this) over eight hundred and fifty miles of difficult and dangerous country... We have thus gained a frontier standing back everywhere about a hundred miles from the plains of India." But this distortion of facts did not influence either the India Office or the Foreign and Political Department officials in New Delhi. All Survey of India maps as well as India Office maps showed the north-east border of India along the foothills of Assam till 1936 (the only exception being the 1930 Simon Commission map).

But in 1938, on the initiative of Sir Olaf Caroe, then Deputy Secretary in the Department of External Affairs, Government of India, the original volume XIV of the *Aitchison's Treaties* was withdrawn from circulation and ordered to be destroyed, and was replaced by a new volume surreptitiously. This volume, which still bore the imprint of 1929 had a new and radically different account of the Simla Conference:

"In 1913 a conference of British, Chinese and Tibetan Plenipotentiaries was convened at Simla in an attempt to negotiate an agreement as to the international status of Tibet with particular regard to the relations of the three governments and to the frontier of Tibet both with China and India. After prolonged negotiations,

the conference under the presidency of Sir Henry McMahon drew up a tripartite convention between Great Britain, China and Tibet, which was initialled in Simla in 1914 by the representatives of the three parties. The Chinese government, however, refused to ratify the agreement, by their refusal depriving themselves of the benefits which they were to obtain thereunder, among which were a definite recognition that Tibet was under Chinese suzerainty, and an agreement to permit a Chinese official with a suitable escort not exceeding 300 men to be maintained at Lhasa. The convention was, however, ratified by Great Britain and Tibet by means of a declaration accepting its terms as binding between themselves.

“The Convention included a definition of boundary both on the Sino-Tibetan and the Indo-Tibetan frontier. On the Sino-Tibetan frontier a double boundary was laid down, the portion between the two boundaries being spoken of as Inner Tibet and that part of Tibet lying west of the westerly boundary as Outer Tibet.

“Owing to the failure of the Chinese government to ratify the Convention, these boundaries, however, remained fluid. The other frontier between India and Tibet on the Assam and Burma borders, which has been accepted by His Majesty’s government and the Tibetan government was laid down between the eastern border of Bhutan and the Isurazi Pass on the Irrawady-Salween water-parting. West of the Brahmaputra bound, this frontier for the most part follows the main axis of the Himalayas, and east of that point included all the tribal territory under the political control of Assam and Burma governments. This frontier throughout stands back some 100 miles from the plains of India and Burma.”

This distorted version of the history of the Simla Conference printed in the concocted volume of *Aitchison’s Treaties* remained the main reference book for officials in India as well as for the historians in India and abroad. This distorted narrative has also been reproduced in several reference works.

The widespread conviction in India that the Simla Convention fixed a legally binding Indo-Tibetan boundary along the Himalayan crest line (the McMahon Line) by a bilateral agreement between India and Tibet on July 3, 1914 derived further support from

Tibetan Precise the most authoritative publication prepared by the British Government of India in 1945 as a classified document meant for their officials only.⁸ Referring to the Simla Convention, in *Tibetan Precise* says :

“Early in the proceedings at Simla a settlement of the frontier between India and Tibet was negotiated with Lonchen Shatra by Sir Henry McMahon and Mr. Bell.....and as a result of the negotiations an agreed line was defined in a map, fixing the boundary for a distance of some 850 miles from Bhutan to the Irrawady-Salween divide. It included in British territory, in addition to large tracts of country inhabited by various Mongoloid tribes, the district of Tawang which had been administered by Tibetan officials for a long time.

“It came to light, by chance, in 1935 that one of the advantages which we secured in 1914 had been overlooked. The inclusion of Tawang within the Indian frontier had been obtained by the boundary agreement with Tibet; but the outbreak of war prevented any action being taken on Sir Henry McMahon’s advice for the administration of that area, and it does not appear that any instructions on the subject were sent to the Assam government”.⁹

That the author of *Tibetan Precise* gave a completely misleading interpretation of the Simla Convention becomes clear from the Note of the Foreign Secretary to Sir Charles Bell, the then political officer in Sikkim : “The fact (is) that the negotiations conducted last year in Simla broke down simply and solely because the Government of India attempted to secure for Tibet greater advantages than the Chinese government were prepared to concede.” The Foreign Secretary also noted that Charles Bell’s recitation of the advantages that would accrue to Britain under the Simla convention was “purely academic, since (it) has not been signed by the Chinese government or accepted by the Russian government and is, therefore, for the present invalid.”¹⁰

So it appears that we can squarely blame the senior British officials like Sir Olaf Caroe and Hugh Richardson for being largely responsible for distortion of history in official documents such as the *Aitchison’s Treaties, Vol XIV* and the *Tibetan Precise*. These two official documents proved to be two veritable

timebombs causing a violent rupture in Sino-Indian relations in the wake of the Tibetan uprising and the flight of the Dalai Lama to India in April 1959.

THE WESTERN SECTOR

The documents available in the India Office Library and official records about the Western Sector however present a more or less correct picture about the British legacy. In Volume XII of *Aitchison's Treaties* relating to Kashmir, it was explicitly written, "The Northern as well as the Eastern boundary of the Kashmir state is still undefined."¹¹ The Survey of India Maps published in the 1920s and 1930s also did not indicate any boundary alignment in the Northern and Eastern frontier of Kashmir and wide spaces between Kashmir and Sinkiang and Kashmir and Tibet were shown blank. In 1945, however, under the guidance of Sir Olaf Caroe, the then Foreign Secretary of India, a new Survey of India map was issued wherein the Indian claim to Aksai Chin was a bit vaguely put forward by a colour-wash with the words 'Boundary Undefined' marked on it. But in 1946, the General Staff of the British Indian Army produced a map of India, marked 'Top Secret', which they submitted to the British Cabinet Mission (1946) along with their report on the defence problems of free India. In this important map, we do not find any definite border line in the western and middle sectors of the Northern frontier of India. Particularly, there was no attempt to push the Kashmir frontier east of the Karakoram pass northward beyond the Karakoram mountains so as to include Aksai Chin within India.¹² For some decades before the independence of India, official maps of India more or less followed the description in *Aitchison's Treaties, Vol XII*, that the northern as well as the eastern boundary of the Kashmir state was undefined. On the other hand, the Chinese official maps during this period consistently showed the Karakoram as the border in the north and north-east of Kashmir, for example, the map attached to *The China Handbook, 1937-43* compiled by the China Ministry of Foreign

Affairs. The Government of India did not send any protest notes to the Government of China before August 1958 on this issue. On August 21, 1958, the Government of India for the first time gave a note to the Chinese Embassy about the map published in *The China Pictorial* (No. 95, July, 1958), in which it alleged, rather vaguely, "the border as depicted in the map includes as Chinese territory...large areas in eastern Ladakh which form part of the State of Jammu and Kashmir..."¹³ In *Tibetan Precipis*, however, there is no reference to any border dispute between Kashmir and Tibet except the minor dispute in the eastern frontier of Kashmir about Dokpo Karpo, 'a high, uninhabited, grazing land.' "It appears that the boundary, as in most grazing countries, had never been fixed... No decision was possible. The Government of India did not think that the Kashmir Durbar's claim was likely to succeed, and suggested a graceful concession, but the Durbar declined...A detailed analysis of the evidence, conducted in 1929 by the Surveyor General, led to the conclusion that Tibet's claim was by far the better."¹⁴

The first Director of the Historical Division, Ministry of External Affairs, K. Zachariah, informed the North and North-East Border Committee (1951-53) that there was no well-defined boundary along the northern and eastern frontier of Kashmir. There were, however, three versions of the northern and eastern boundary of Kashmir advocated by the British officials at various periods since 1846, when Kashmir came under British paramountcy: (1) *Sir John Ardagh Line* (1897), which showed a boundary alignment which took the crest of the Kuenlun range and placed within British territory the upper reaches of the Yarkand river and its tributaries and the Karakash river, as well as the whole of the Aksai Chin plateau; (2) *Macartney Macdonald Line* (1899), which put forth a less ambitious territorial claim north of the Karakoram ranges. East of the Karakoram Pass, it left to China the whole of the Karakash Valley and almost all of the Aksai Chin proper. It followed the Lak Tsang range, the Lingzi Tang salt plains and the whole of the Change Chenmo valley, as well as the Chip Chap river further north; and (3) *The Karakoram Line which was based on the watershed principle.*

In accordance with the advice of the North-east Border Committee of the Government of India, a new Survey of India map was published quietly in July 1954, soon after the signing of the Sino-Indian Trade Agreement. This map showed Aksai Chin as well as all the territory South of the MacMahon Line in the Assam Himalayas as belonging to India. Nehru seems to have thought at the outset that he was to strike a bargain and treat this officially registered Indian border claim as no more than an opening bid for a negotiated settlement. Nehru maintained a pliant attitude about the exact location of the frontier in the Ladakh region (i.e. Aksai Chin) till October 1959 and made several statements to the effect that India's claims in the Aksai Chin and Ladakh area were not as sacrosanct as the McMahan Line. Also, Nehru issued a secret directive to his officials on September 13, 1959, which said : "The Aksai Chin area has to be left more or less as it is, as we have no check-posts there and practically little of access. Any question in relation to it can only be considered, when the time arises, in the context of the larger question of the entire broder. For the present, we have to put up with the Chinese occupation of this north-eastern sector (of Ladakh) and their road across it...our general instructions to our people should be that they should avoid any provocative action..."¹⁵

In the original resolution of the Working Committee of the Congress Party, .drafted on Sepetember 25, 1959, for the A.I.C.C. meeting held in Chandigarh, there was a reference only to "the recent development on the North-East frontier of India", there being no specific reference to the Ladakh Border. This was suitably amended.¹⁶ From this, we can presume that the Congress High Command also was not sure about the Indian claim on Aksai Chin until then.

In fact, until October 21, 1959, Nehru was hopeful about a peaceful settlement of the border dispute. At a press conference in Calcutta that day, Nehru said that he did not think there was any 'major idea' behind the Chinese incursions into Indian territory. "I am inclined to think that all these were tagged to Tibet. There were no Chinese forces on the other side of the

border before the Tibetan rebellion. But after the rebellion Chinese forces came partly to crush the rebellion and partly to stop the Tibetan people from coming over to India or contact the people whom the Chinese imagined to be connected with the Tibetan rebellion.”

But in spite of this optimism, there was a serious clash between Indian and Chinese patrols near the Kongka Pass. How could this happen? It appears that in spite of Nehru's directive of September 13, 1959 for restraint in Ladakh, some Home Ministry officials and the Indian Intelligence Bureau sent a forward patrol in the Kongka Pass region. In the resultant border clash, the leader of a Chinese patrol lost his life, while nine Indian border policemen were killed. This incident was discussed in a high level official meeting called by Nehru, and attended by the Defence Minister and the Chief of the Army Staff as also senior officials of the External Affairs and Home Ministries. According to B. N. Mullik, then Intelligence Bureau Chief, “The Intelligence Bureau was made the common target by the Army Headquarters and the External Affairs Ministry and accused of expansionism and causing provocations on the frontier... The Army demanded that no further movements of armed police should take place on the frontier without their clearance.”¹⁷ But the facts revealed at this conclave were kept a closely guarded secret till 1972. Publicly, the Government of India accused China of “unprovoked aggression.”

Even before this incident, the Historical Division of the External Affairs Ministry was busy cooking up evidence in favour of a boundary claim in Kashmir corresponding to *Sir John Ardagh Line* (1897). India Office records show that there were attempts to revive this claim in 1912 and 1915. But the Secretary of State for India rejected these proposals on weighty reasons. The Historical Division misinformed Nehru about British border proposal of 1899, the *Macartney-Macdonald Line*. As a result, Nehru wrote to Chou En-lai on September 26, 1959. “The proposal made in 1899 by the British government referred... to the northern frontier of Ladakh and Kashmir with Sinkiang. It was stated in that context that the northern boundary ran along

the Kuenlun range to a point east of 80' east longitude, where it met the eastern boundary of Ladakh. This signified beyond doubt that the whole of Aksai Chin area lay in Indian territory."¹⁸ Alastair Lamb¹⁹ and Robert A. Huttenback²⁰ correctly quoted the letter of C.M. Macdonald to the Government of China in 1899. Lamb comments: "This note has been misquoted to imply the inclusion of all Aksai Chin within India. Macartney-Macdonald alignment divides in two what is now generally called Aksai Chin."²¹ According to Huttenback, "In referring to the letter in detail they (Indians) altered its provisions considerably. Instead of saying that it was the spur running south from the Kuenlun range which former British maps had shown as the eastern boundary of Ladakh—a situation which the proposals in the letter did not essentially change—they said it was the Kuenlun range itself which the British had described as being the northern frontier of Ladakh."²²

Two weeks after the Kongka Pass incident, on November 4, 1959, in an External Affairs Ministry note to the Embassy of China, we find a more detailed description of the Northern Border, particularly in the section eastward from the Karakoram Pass. "From the Karakoram Pass, this boundary proceeds north-east *via* the Qaratagh Pass and then follows the Kuenlun range from a point 15 miles north of Haji Langar in Peak 21250 (Survey of India map) which lies east of longitude 80' east." This claim has no basis in any international agreement. This note also falsely presented that "This line constituted the watershed between the Indus system and the Khotan system in China."²³ *The Imperial Gazetteer of India* (1908), *Chamber's Gazetteer* (1962), *Columbia Encyclopaedia* (1963), the Swedish explorer Sven Hedin, Owen Lattimore—all agree that the Karakoram Mountains (and not the Kuenluns) are the main water-divide in this region.

The Historical Division, Indian Ministry of External Affairs, then produced an amazing document, *Historical Background of the Himalayan Frontier of India*, which was neither history nor geography. This categorically asserted: "India's northern frontier has lain where it now runs for nearly three thousand years. The area along this frontier, which is nearly 2,500 miles

long from the Kuenlun mountains in the far north to the junction with Burma in the east, have always been a part of India... This northern frontier of India is for much of its length the crest of the Himalayan range. The Himalayas have always dominated Indian life, just as they have dominated the Indian landscape." The well-known Indian columnist, 'Waqnis', rightly condemned this document for its "wrong statement of facts and illogical references" and said: "I do wish this essay into history assisted by crutches of impressive statement had not been made."²⁴ The document, however, served to add fuel to the fire of nationalist passions and prejudices in the context of the Kongka Pass incident, as the true nature, and origin of the conflict remained unrevealed to the public. The Congress Working Committee in its resolution of November 10, 1959, rejected Chou En-lai's reasonable proposal to Nehru, made on November 7, 1959 for direct negotiations on the border dispute—with troops of both sides withdrawing 20 kilometres from their current positions. The resolution noted that the frontiers of India had been fixed by history, usage, and treaty, and especially stressed the sanctity of India's frontiers as being "in the Himalayas, the essence of India's life and thought for ages past." On November 10, 1959, Nehru addressed a public meeting in Agra in which he referred to the border issue. According to G. F. Hudson, this speech marked "the political transformation of Nehru from the trusting exponent of Panch Sheel to the embattled patriot.. when he declared to the acclamation of Indian nationalists that 'We cannot allow China to keep a foot on our chest'".²⁵ According to Taya Zinkin, "The Prime Minister's speech at Agra was significant not for what he said but for the way he said it. For the first time since the Chinese started their pinprick machinegun technique on Ladakh border, he spoke as a Hindu. He told his audience that the Himalayas were India's 'Crown' and he referred to the sacred nature of those mountains which were woven into Indian thought, as part of the life blood of Hinduism."²⁶

In early November, Nehru sent a secret memorandum to key ambassadors abroad in which he was reported to have said that "he is convinced now that China in the present dispute is only

after territorial gains from India and not interested in a settlement based on traditional frontiers; therefore he does not see much chance of a reasonable negotiated settlement of the dispute".³⁷ According to Neville Maxwell, this sea-change in Nehru's thinking about India's claim to northern frontiers was very much influenced by S. Gopal, Director, Historical Division, External Affairs Ministry, who had been sent to London to go through the material on India's borders in the India Office Records and Foreign Office archives and make an objective appraisal of Historical evidence.³⁸ What sort of Historical evidence Gopal dug up in London which would establish Indian claims over the Aksai Chin area still remain a mystery.

Distortion of history, suppression of facts, as also withholding the official documents relating to the northern frontier during the days of the British Raj since 1914 from independent historians have been largely responsible for the aggravation of the Sino-Indian border conflict. While the Chinese army personnel have been operating in the Aksai Chin region since the autumn of 1950 (if not earlier), the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India in his first note on the subject referred to "part of the Sinkiang-Tibet Road encroaching upon Indian territory" and said: "The Government of India are anxious to settle these petty frontier disputes so that friendly relations between the two countries may not suffer."³⁹ Since the Kongka Pass incident, however, the dispute over Aksai Chin became the major *causa belli* leading to a semi-permanent confrontation between India and China along the northern frontiers of India, entailing continuing wastage of huge resources for the two nations. *The role of the Historical Division of the External Affairs Ministry in the development of this dispute should be closely scrutinised by a high power Parliamentary Commission, having access to official records from 1914 to 1947. They should find out the true legacy of the British Raj with regard to northern frontiers of the Republic of India as the successor government to the British Raj.*

History is the most dangerous product evolved from the Chemistry of the intellect. Its properties are well-known. It causes dreams, it intoxicates whole people, gives them false

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memories, quickens their reflexes, keeps their old wounds open, torments them in their repose, leads them into delusions, either of grandeur or persecution, and makes nations bitter, arrogant, insufferable, and vain.³⁰

NOTES :

1. White Paper 1, pp. 49-50.
2. It should be noted that since 1939, most of the officials in the External Affairs Department, New Delhi, were unaware of this authentic narrative of the Simla Conference, as the original Aitchison had been withdrawn and replaced by a spurious edition published in 1938, but falsely bearing the imprint of 1929.
3. White Paper II, p. 56.
4. White Paper I, p. 53.
5. White Paper II, p. 29.
6. White Paper II, p. 39.
7. White Paper II, p. 39.
8. *Tibetan Precis* was written by H. E. Richardson, an ICS officer, under the direction of Olaf Caroe. It has been regarded by Indian frontier officials as a sort of Bible. But few of them know that this 'Bible' has given them a distorted version of the origins of the McMahon Line.
9. India Office Records, L/PS/20 D 222, pp. 1^r, 64.
10. India Office Records, Political, 46, L/PS/10/344, No. 448 EB, Simla, September 3, 1915.
11. *Aitchison Treaties, Volume XII*, Part 1, 1931, p. 5.
12. India Office Records Library, PO/D3.
13. White Paper I, p. 46.
14. *Tibetan Precis*, p. 123.
15. Quoted in *India's China War*, Neville Maxwell, p. 139.
16. *The Hindu*, September 28, 1959.
17. B. N. Mullik, *My Years With Nehru*, pp. 243-44.
18. White Paper II, p. 36.
19. Alastair Lamb, *China-India Border*, p. 182.
20. Robert A. Huttenback, "A Historical Note on the Sino-Indian Dispute Over the Aksai-Chin", *The China Quarterly*, April-June, 1964.
21. Lamb, *op cit*, p. 174.
22. Huttenback, *op cit*, p. 204.
23. White Paper II, p. 21.
24. *The Statesman*, November 23, 1959.
25. *The China Quarterly*, April-June, 1971.
26. *The Guardian*, November 12, 1959.
27. *The Hindu*, November 13, 1959.
28. Maxwell, *op cit*, p. 119.
29. White Paper I, pp. 26-27.
30. Paul Valery, *History and Politics*, 1931.

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SINO-INDIAN AGREEMENT ON TIBETAN TRADE AND INTERCOURSE ITS ORIGIN AND SIGNIFICANCE

A historical study of the Sino-Indian agreement on Tibetan Trade and Intercourse signed in April 1954 shows that a new treaty relating to Tibetan trade and intercourse was naturally incumbent upon the government of India once it extended recognition to the People's Republic of China. The undue privileges enjoyed by the British in Tibet were based only on the secret Anglo-Tibetan Trade Regulations of 1914 concluded without the knowledge of the Chinese. The real choice was either to relinquish these privileges or to risk forcible expulsion from Tibet. There was a duality in the Indian attitude to the Simla Convention of 1914. Nehru was agreeable to disowning the extra-territorial rights in Tibet inherited from the Simla Convention. On the other hand, he was determined to maintain the McMahon Line of the Simla Convention as India's north-eastern frontier with China. Nehru, therefore, decided against bringing the frontier problem into the agenda for the Tibetan treaty negotiations.

It has been a part of the wisdom of the West, especially since the Sino-Indian border conflict in 1962, to consider the signing of the Sino-Indian Agreement (April 1954) as a major diplomatic blunder on the part of Nehru. Coral Bell wrote in her article "China: the Communists and the World", "In its way the Tibetan Treaty was a master stroke of Chinese diplomacy."

Referring to Chou En-lai as "perhaps the most notable diplomatic conjurer since Bismarck" she concludes:

"It is not every diplomatist who can induce a neighbour (however green) to ratify with a treaty a marked deterioration in his own strategic situation (which the Chinese-move was to prove

to India)". (*Foreign Policies of the Powers*, edited by F. S. Northedge, 1974, p. 128).

The late Dorothy Woodman commented in her book, *Himalayan Frontiers* (1969), p. 225 :

"Looking back, it seems extraordinary that Indian representatives did not raise the frontier issue as such ; the Panch Sheel Agreement was a moral if not lasting victory for the Indian idea of peaceful relations. It was surely naive of the Indians to settle for pious phrase-making and to assume that Chou En-lai meant what he said when he told them the Agreement settled all problems. This would have been an opportunity to raise the issue of the McMahon Line, which Nehru had already described in Lok Sabha as India's boundary...Indian officials tied their own hands at the beginning of the Conference by agreeing to the Chinese proposals that frontiers should not be discussed."

Peter Lyon wrote in his chapter, *The Foreign Policy of India* :

"In the 1954 Sino-Indian Treaty of Trade and Friendship concerning...India in effect abandoned any historic rights in Tibet, receiving in return nothing more substantial than Chinese promises of eternal friendship...Having conceded that Tibet is part of China, India subsequently has had to live with the unfavourable military and other aspects of this (e. g. the flight of the Dalai Lama, the influx of refugees, the loss of trade with Tibet) and has come tardily and at high cost to recognise that the 1954 Agreement, far from inaugurating a peaceful settlement in perpetuity, was but an early, yet major, Chinese move in what now looks like a protracted Sino-Indian struggle along the whole of the Himalayas and elsewhere. (*Foreign Policies of the Powers*, p. 265).

Indian authors like Girilal Jain (*Panch Sheela and After*, 1960), the late P. C. Chakraborti (*India-China Relations*, 1961), A. G. Noorani (*Our Credulity and Negligence*, 1963), Vidya Prakash Dutt (*China's Foreign Policy*, 1964), S. N. Varma (*Himalayan Frontiers*, 1965), also more or less agreed with the Western commentators quoted above.

On the other hand, Nehru, replying to the critics of the Sinc-

Indian Agreement on Tibet, on May 18, 1954, in the House of the People, said :

“We recently made an agreement with China. Several members did not like this agreement. They say that we have shown great weakness, that we have committed the mistake of admitting that China has full authority over Tibet.....*In my opinion, we have done no better thing than this since we became independent. I have no doubt about this.*” (*Lok Sabha Debates*, Part II, Vol. V, No. 71, May 18, 1954, Columns 7664-7670. Indian Press Digest’s translation from Hindi, quoted from M. A. Fisher and I. V. Bondurant, *Indian Views of Sino-Indian Relations*, No. 1, February 1956, Appendix IV, p. xix).

It was rather peculiar that the Sino-Indian Trade Agreement did not refer to earlier treaties on the subject between the Government of Great Britain and the Government of China since the 1890s—to which the Republic of India and the Central People’s Government of China were the successor states, respectively. This has been a cause of confusion about the origin of this Agreement. The Preamble to the 1954 Trade Agreement contained the five principles of peaceful co-existence—(1) Mutual Respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty; (2) Mutual Non-Aggression; (3) Mutual Non-Interference in each other’s internal affairs; (4) Equality and Mutual Benefit; (5) Peaceful Co-existence—which (with marginal modification) gained widespread acceptance among nations and provided a code of international conduct almost parallel to the U. N. Charter. This is perhaps another reason why many scholars did not bother to go into the historical origin of the text of the Agreement relating to Tibetan Trade and Intercourse (which involved a volume on the exchange of goods and services, amounting to not more than six to seven million pounds per year).

ORIGINS OF THE TREATY

[1] *Anglo-Chinese Convention 1890 : Trade Regulations, 1893*

The lure of the trans-Himalayan trade inspired the rulers of

the East India Company since the days of Warren Hastings. The first series of Regulations regarding Tibetan Trade, Communications and Pasturage were signed in December 1893. The chief provisions established a trade mart at Yatung, eight miles on the Tibetan side of the frontier, and the practice of extra-territorial jurisdiction in the event of trade disputes arising between British and Chinese or Tibetan subjects in Tibet. Owing to obstructions on the part of the Tibetans, this Convention, however, did not become effective.

[II] *The Lhasa Convention, 1904*

As a sequel to the Younghusband expedition (1903-1904) into Tibet, a convention between Great Britain and Tibet was signed at Lhasa in September 1904. Its main provisions were as follows :

I. In addition to the trade mart at Yatung in Chumbi Valley, new trade marts were to be opened at Gartok in Western Tibet and at Gyantse. At each of these marts, a British Trade Agent would be stationed.

II. In a separate article of the Convention it was stipulated that the Gyantse Trade Agent could visit Lhasa from time to time, thus in effect converting him into a British representative at the Tibetan capital in all but name.

III. The Tibetans were to pay the British an indemnity of Rs. 7.5 million in 75 annual settlements, and until this sum had been paid the British would occupy the Chumbi Valley, through which ran the main road from British India to Lhasa.

IV. The Tibetan authorities would in future accept communications from the Government of India and would enter relations with the British without Chinese mediation.

V. The Tibetan authorities would refuse to permit the agents of other Powers to establish themselves in the country or to interfere in its internal affairs. Subjects of such Powers, moreover, would not be allowed to obtain commercial concessions in Tibet.

The Lhasa Convention, however, had to be modified under pressure from Czarist Russia. It was also subject to Chinese protest, since it sought to nullify the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890, which had by implication afforded British recognition of China's status as Tibetan overlord. Thus the Lhasa Conven-

tion could not be accepted by the Home Government as it stood. It was later modified by a declaration, which cancelled the Separate Article allowing the Gyantse Trade Agent to visit Lhasa and reduced the indemnity from Rs. 7.5 million to Rs. 2.5 million. The length of the British occupation of Chumbi was reduced from 75 years to 3 years.

[III] *Anglo-Chinese Convention, 1906*

A Convention between Great Britain and China in respect of Tibet was signed at Peking on April 27, 1906, which confirmed the Anglo-Tibetan Convention with certain modifications in favour of China. In this Anglo-Chinese Adhesion Agreement, Great Britain agreed to refrain from any interference in the internal administration of Tibet, whilst a monopoly of all concessions and industrial enterprises in Tibet was reserved for the Chinese. This also provided :

...it has been arranged that at the Trade Marts specified in Article II (i. e. at Gyantse, Gartok and Yatung), Great Britain shall be entitled to lay down telegraph lines connecting with India.

[IV] *Anglo-Russian Convention, 1907*

The Anglo-Russian Convention in regard to Tibet was subsequently concluded in August, 1907, and the British and Russian governments thereby committed themselves to a self-denying ordinance, by which they agreed to abstain from seeking concessions in Tibet, and from stationing representatives at Lhasa.

[V] *Anglo Chinese Trade Regulations, 1908*

The last legally valid international agreement relating to Tibetan trade and intercourse to which the Republic of India might be regarded as a legatee, being the successor to the British Raj, was the Agreement of April 20, 1908 between Great Britain, China and Tibet, amending the Trade Regulations of 1893. These provided, *inter alia*, that :

(2) the administration of the Trade Marts should remain with the Tibetan officers, under the Chinese officers' supervision and directions ;

(4) the British Agent, at least for the immediate future, should enjoy extra-territorial powers so that he could preside over or be present at trials involving British subjects in Tibet ;

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(5) Great Britain agreed to relinquish her rights of extra-territoriality in Tibet, whenever such rights should be relinquished in China ;

(6) after the withdrawal of British troops, all the rest-houses (eleven in number) built by Great Britain upon the routes leading from the Indian frontier to Gyantse were to be taken over at original cost by China and rented to the Indian Government at a fair rate. Great Britain should also be prepared to consider the transfer to China of the telegraph lines from the Indian frontier to Gyantse, when the telegraph lines from China reached that mart ;

(9) British officers and subjects, as well as goods, proceeding to the Trade Marts must adhere to the trade routes from the frontier of India. They should not, without permission, proceed beyond the marts, or to Gartok from Yatung and Gyantse, or from Gartok to Yatung and Gyantse, by any route through the interior of Tibet. But the natives of the Indian frontier doing customary trade in Tibet would be exempt from such restrictions ;

(12) China was to arrange effective police measures at the marts and along the routes to the marts. On fulfilment of these arrangements, Great Britain undertook to withdraw the Trade Agents' guards at the marts and the troops stationed in Tibet.

The new Trade Regulations were to remain in force for ten years, at which time they could either be revised or permitted to continue unchanged for a further ten years when, and at the end of successive ten year periods, revision would again be possible.

According to Alastair Lamb : "For those.....who were not seeking to maintain British prestige in Tibet and to combat that of China.....the 1908 Trade Regulations had much to recommend them...From a purely commercial point of view, the main weakness of these Regulations was their failure to make any provision for the sale in Tibet of Indian tea. (*The McMahon Line*, Vol. I, pp. 150-51.)

According to Charles Bell, however : "The general effect of the (1908) Regulations was still further to push the British and Indians out of Tibet...by the ninth regulation our Government agree that 'British officers and subjects (including Indians) should

be barred from travelling in Tibet beyond Gyantse'. No such restrictions had been accepted by us during the whole course of Tibetan history. The Indian pilgrims were accustomed to visit the sites sacred to Hindus at Manasarowar and elsewhere. Such pilgrimage now became illegal...

"And the Tibetants were not pleased. For matters which they regarded as within their own control were placed under the control of the Chinese officers. In one way or another they were placed under Chinese domination." (*Tibet: Past and Present*, p. 91).

[VI] *Anglo-Tibetan Trade Regulations of 1914 and their Dubious Validity*

The Tripartite Simla Conference between Britain, China and Tibet in 1913-1914 was primarily concerned with the fixing of the political status of Tibet and delimiting the Sino-Tibetan boundary. The draft of the Convention was initialled by all the plenipotentiaries. But the Chinese plenipotentiary refused to proceed to the full signature of the Convention. The British and the Tibetan delegates, however, secretly signed a declaration recognising the Convention. Owing to the prohibitive clauses of the Anglo-Russian Convention (1907), however, the Simla Convention could have no legal validity. It had contained the following references to Tibetan trade :

Art. 6 : ...Not less favourable treatment shall be accorded to British commerce than to the commerce of China or the most favourable nation.

Art. 7(a) : The Tibet Trade Regulations of 1893 and 1908 are hereby cancelled.

(b) : The Tibetan Government engages to negotiate with the British Government new Trade Regulations for Outer Tibet to give effect to Articles II, IV and V of the Convention of September 7, 1904, between Great Britain without delay, provided always that such Regulations shall in no way modify the present Convention except with the consent of the Chinese Government.

Art. 8 : The British Agent who resides at Gyantse may visit Lhasa with his escort whenever it is necessary to consult the Tibetan Government...

In volume XIV of the Aitchison's *Collection of Engagements treaties and sanads*, published under the authority of the Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, in 1929 (the first to deal with the period covered by the Simla negotiations), it was written :

“In 1913 a conference of Tibetan, Chinese and British plenipotentiaries met in India to try and bring about a settlement in regard to matters on the Sino-Tibetan frontier, and a tripartite Convention was drawn up and initialled in 1914. The Chinese Government, however, refused to permit their plenipotentiary to proceed to full signature.”

There was no reference to the Anglo-Tibetan Regulations signed in 1914. The record referred only to the previous (1908) Regulations, and added :

“The (1908) Regulations were subject to revision after 10 years ; but though certain modifications were made as a result of the abortive Tripartite Convention of 1914 they still remain the basis of the Indo-Tibetan trade arrangements.” (p. 20)

SURREPTITIOUS REVIVAL OF ANGLO-TIBETAN TRADE REGULATIONS (1914)

From a letter dated May 22, 1928 written to the Secretary, Political Department, India Office, London by the Foreign Secretary, Government of India, it appears that :

“In 1925 His Majesty's Government agreed that the Trade Regulations of 1914 should be regarded as being in force, but they should not be made public.” (See author's article on “The McMahon Line”, *The China Quarterly*, No. 47, July-September, 1971, p. 524).

What was the effect of this surreptitious decision, made unilaterally by the British without consultation with China ? The Trade Regulations of 1893 and 1908 were cancelled. According to H. E. Richardson, the Trade Regulations of 1914, “embodied some differences from the former Regulations in detail and also in principle. Restrictions on trade, such as

previously existing duty on Indian tea imported into Tibet and the creation of monopolies, were removed, and British control over the sites of the Trade Agencies was put on a better footing. The change in principle was the absence of any mention of the Chinese who in the earlier Regulations had been mentioned in a sort of supervisory and superior capacity. In the new Regulations trade relations in Tibet were treated as exclusively the concern of the Tibetans and the British ; the Chinese were nowhere mentioned. Control over the Trade Marts—except for the British Agency enclaves—the protection of the trade routes and the joint trial of cases between British and Tibetan nationals, in which powers had formerly been exercised by the Chinese, were now to rest with the Tibetans. Provisions in the earlier Regulations about the eventual withdrawal of the British escorts and the handing over of the British post and telegraph installations and rest-houses to the Chinese were cancelled. The Trade Regulations in effect accepted the new state of affairs established by the eviction of the Chinese from Tibet and recognised the right of the Tibetans to conduct their trade with the British by themselves.” (*Tibet and Its History*, p. 115.)

**SURREPTITIOUS ALTERATION OF THE TEXT OF VOLUME XIV OF
AITCHISON'S TREATIES IN 1938**

While the British Government secretly accepted as effective the new Anglo-Tibetan Trade Regulations, which were a product of the abortive Simla Convention (1914), there were other problems connected with this Convention which needed sorting out. While the British Government had convened the Simla Conference in 1913 with the express purpose of delimiting the Sino-Tibetan boundary, i. e. the boundary between Outer and Inner Tibet, the chief British negotiator, Sir Henry McMahon sat in secret conclave with the Tibetan Plenipotentiary, Lonchen Shatra, and persuaded him to sign, in March 1914, a bilateral secret boundary agreement on the north-eastern frontier of India, pushing the Indo-Tibetan boundary east of Bhutan from the foothills of Assam to the Himalayan crest

line. This was shown by a red line on the Simla Convention map, drawn by the British, which looked like an extension of the boundary between Inner Tibet and China. From 1935, this came to be known in British-Indian official correspondence as the McMahon Line. This line was forgotten by the parties concerned (i.e. India and Tibet), as the main tripartite convention about the Sino-Tibetan boundary proved to be a failure.

In 1935, however, Olaf Caroe, then Deputy Secretary, External Foreign and Political Department, became aware of the secret exchanges between Sir Henry McMahon and Lonchen Shatra, almost by accident. From then on he tried his level best to get the McMahon Line accepted by the Tibetans. To strengthen the British-Indian claim to the McMahon Line in fresh negotiations with the Tibetans after the lapse of more than twenty years, he arranged for the issue of new Survey of India maps showing the north-eastern frontier of India with Tibet along the crest of the Himalayas (i.e., the McMahon Line), while the previous official maps showed this border along the foothills of Assam. At the same time, he withdrew from circulation the original copies of the 1929 edition of Volume XIV of *Aitchison's Treaties* and surreptitiously replaced them by a spurious edition printed in 1938, but carrying an imprint of 1929. In this new version of Volume XIV of *Aitchison's Treaties* it was said that the Simla Conference, convened in 1913, was to negotiate an agreement as to the international status of Tibet, with particular regard to the relations of Britain, China and Tibet, and to the *frontiers of Tibet both with China and India*. It referred to the refusal by the Chinese Government to ratify the convention, but asserted that the *Simla Convention was ratified by Great Britain and Tibet by means of declaration accepting the terms binding between themselves*.

In the narrative relating to Tibetan trade, however, certain contradictions cropped up. On page 19 of the newly improvised edition of Volume XIV of *Aitchison's Treaties*, the original draft about Tibetan Trade Agreement was maintained as follows :

“The (1908) Regulations were subject to revision after 10 years ; but, though certain modifications were made as a result of the *abortive Tripartite Convention of 1914*, they still remain the basis

of *Indo-Tibetan trade* arrangements.” (N. B. : In the original edition these lines are printed on *page 20*).

But in this spurious publication we find the following addition in the narrative on *page 21* :

“A new set of trade regulations between Great Britain and Tibet was concluded under this (1914) Convention to replace the earlier regulations of 1893 and 1908.”

Moreover, on pages 39-41, Anglo-Tibetan Trade Regulations (July 3, 1914) were printed in detail, ignoring the statement made earlier in the narrative—on page 20—about the abortive nature of the Convention of 1914.

TIBETAN TRADE REGULATIONS SINCE AUGUST 15, 1947

The new Government of Independent India, after August 15, 1947, accepted the McMahon Line and the Anglo-Tibetan Trade Regulations (1914) as their legitimate legacies from the British Raj. Most of the Indian officials in the External Affairs Ministry relied on the concocted version of Volume XIV of *Aitchison's Treaties* printed in 1938, but carrying an imprint of 1929, for their source of information. Also, the Indian leaders, including Nehru, were unaware of the true legacy in relation to China and Tibet which they had inherited from the British Raj. According to Dorothy Woodman, in 1948 the Chinese Government (Nationalist) “proposed to Delhi that the 1908 Tibetan Trade Regulations should be revised. Nehru, recognising that this was in effect a trap to obtain India's admission that the Simla Agreement was not a valid document, replied that India recognised only the validity of that Agreement which superseded the 1908 Regulations”. (*Himalayan Frontiers*, p. 216.)

Soon after the recognition of the People's Republic of China on December 30, 1949, the Indian Government felt it necessary to make it clear that the Simla Convention of 1914 had been acted upon in India and Tibet, though there had been no formal signature to it by the Chinese Government. Nehru made a statement to this effect on February 8, 1950 and also later in the

Indian Parliament, and these statements were not challenged by the People's Government of China (Though the Nationalist Government of China had sent four protest Notes to the British Embassy in China on the gradual encroachment by the British into the Chinese-claimed territory south of the "so-called McMahon Line"—in July, September and November 1946, and January 1947). The Nationalist Government of China also protested on the same issue by Note to the Indian Embassy in China in February 1947. On November 18, 1949, the Chinese (Nationalist) Ambassador to India delivered a Note to the Indian Ministry of External Affairs repudiating the Simla Convention, which the Indian Government held to be valid.

The Government of India, however, did not make any explicit reference to the terms of the Anglo-Tibetan Trade Regulations (1914), on the basis of which they were still enjoying certain extra-territorial rights in Tibet, ignoring their doubtful validity. In the context of the impending march of the Chinese Communist Army in the autumn of 1950 to the eastern frontier of Tibet and the capture of Chamdo (a long disputed border town on the western bank of the Mekong and currently a stronghold of the Tibetan Government), the Government of India exchanged several Notes with the People's Government of China, pleading for a peaceful resolution of the Sino-Tibetan dispute in the context of the serious war situation in Korea, which might lead to a global conflict at any moment. In the official Note dated October 31, 1950, the Government of India reminded China of certain privileges which they had inherited from the British Raj. These related to the presence of an Indian Agent in Lhasa, existence of Trade Agencies at Gyantse and Yatung, maintenance of post and telegraph offices along the trade route up to Gyantse (the telegraph line had actually been extended to Lhasa in 1922 : *vide Aitchison's Treaties*, Vol XIV, p. 22), and the existence of a small military escort at Gyantse (the size of the military escort was increased from about 120 to 300 after Indian independence). The Government of India, however, did not refer to the Anglo-Tibetan Trade Regulations (1914) under which they enjoyed these privileges based on extra-territorial rights in Tibet. The People's Govern-

ment of China, in their letter of November 16, 1950, did not directly refer specifically to the Indian Mission in Lhasa or to the Indian Trade Agents in Tibet or the Indian military escort at Gyantse etc. But the Chinese Note said at the end :

“As long as our two sides adhere strictly to the principles of mutual respect for each other’s territory, sovereignty, equality and mutual benefit, we are convinced that the friendship between China and India should be developed in a normal way and that 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.” (*Documents of International Affairs*, R11A [OUP, 1950].)

SARDAR PATEL’S LETTER TO NEHRU CONCERNING TIBET

In a demi-official letter of November 7, 1950 to the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, Sardar Patel, expressed his anxiety about the Tibetan problem in the context of the Chinese advance, along the following lines :

“...we have to consider what new situation faces us as a result of the disappearance of Tibet, as we know it, and the expansion of China almost up to our gates... In 1914, we entered into a Convention with Tibet which was not endorsed by the Chinese. We seem to have regarded Tibetan autonomy as extending to independent treaty relationships. Presumably, all that we required was Chinese counter-signature. The Chinese interpretation of suzerainty seems to be different. We can, therefore, safely assume that very soon they will disown all the stipulations which Tibet has entered with us in the past. That throws into melting pot all frontier and commercial settlements with Tibet on which we have been functioning and acting during the last half a century”... (*vide The Chinese Betrayal*, B. N. Mullik, p. 117)

According to H. E. Richardson, “Later, in December of the same year (1950), the Indian Government made a further direct overture to Peking on the same issue and was coldly informed that no ‘unequal treaty’ could be allowed to stand. (*Tibet and Its History*, p. 195).

FAILURE OF THE TIBETAN APPEAL TO THE U.N. AND THE SINO-TIBETAN AGREEMENT (MAY, 1951)

In the meantime, the Tibetan Government had sent a complaint against China, on November 7, 1950, to the U.N. Secretary-General. The Tibetans described the Chinese attack as clear "aggression". But none of the Great power gave any support to this complaint, and the Indian delegate in the Steering Committee spoke and voted in favour of an adjournment of the discussion *sine die*, on the basis of the Chinese assurance conveyed to the Government of India about the peaceful settlement of the Tibetan problem. Later, on May 23, 1951, China announced the signing of the 17-point Sino-Tibetan Agreement, which provided that :

"The Central People's Government shall conduct all external affairs of the area of Tibet ; and there will be peaceful co-existence with neighbouring countries and establishment and development of fair commercial and trading relations with them on the basis of equality, mutual respect for territory and sovereignty." (Art. 14)

The Agreement also provided "...the Tibetan people have the right of exercising national regional autonomy under the unified leadership of the Central People's Government." (T. I. Li, *Tibet To day and Yesterday*, pp. 307-309).

SINO-INDIAN NEGOTIATIONS CONCERNING TIBET, 1951-1953

In an informal conversation with the Indian Ambassador, K. M. Panikkar, in September 1951, Premier Chou En-lai expressed his anxiety to safeguard in every way Indian interests in Tibet, on which matter "there was no territorial dispute or controversy between India and China."

He added : "The question of stabilisation of Indian frontier was a matter of common interest to India, Nepal and China, and could be best done by discussion between the three countries."

On October 4, 1951, the Indian Ambassador in Peking informed the Chinese Premier that the Government of India would welcome negotiations on the subjects mentioned by premier Chou En-lai.

(J. Nehru, *India's Foreign Policy : Selected Speeches*, September 1946 to April 1961, p. 360). Sardar Panikkar returned to Peking early in February 1952, after an interlude, and had an interview with Chou En-lai immediately after. He informed Chou En-lai that "the Government of India were ready to discuss the regularisation of relations with Tibet". (*In Two Chinas*, pp. 170-71). In May 1952, before his departure from China, Panikkar had further conversations with Chou En-lai regarding Tibet. As written by Panikkar in his memoirs :

"While accepting the legitimacy of our trade and cultural interests in the area, he (Chou En-lai) suggested that the Political Agency in Lhasa, an office of dubious legality, should be regularised by its transformation into an Indian Consulate in exchange for a similar Chinese office in Bombay. So far as our other posts and institutions were concerned, some of them, like telegraph lines, military escort at Yatung, were to be abolished quietly in time and Trade Agents and other subordinate agencies brought within the framework of our normal Consulate relations. These were to be taken up as and when the circumstances became ripe. (*In Two Chinas*, p. 175)

After the departure of Sardar Panikkar from Peking, there were some exchange between the Governments of India and China in July-August 1952 over the despatch of fresh detachments of Indian troops to replace the guards at Gyantse and Yatung, seizure of the wireless transmitter of the Indian Trade Agent at Gartok, and China's refusal to allow the Political Officer in Sikkim to visit the Lhasa without a proper Chinese visa. Nehru sent a message to Chou En-lai in August 1952 expressing surprise and regret at these happenings. He further mentioned that the Government of India were anxious for a final settlement of all pending matters, and suggested that the time had come for these to be settled to mutual advantage.

Previous to this, T. N. Kaul, the Indian Charge-d'Affaires had informed the Chinese Government that the Government of India attached much importance to Trade Agencies and also to the trade marts and pilgrim traffic, and hoped that these would continue till the matter could be discussed. In the month of July,

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Chou En-lai had made it clear to him in an official Note that the privileges which were being enjoyed by the Government of India as a result of unequal treaties forced by the British did not any longer exist. The relationship between China and the Government of India in the Tibet region should, therefore, be built afresh through negotiations. In this Note he also suggested the immediate solution of the question of the Mission at Lhasa. According to B. N. Mullik :

“The Government of India on their part agreed to the modifications of some of the practices which had grown in the past to remove those which might be considered as affecting China’s dignity. The outstanding questions between India and China were listed as the Indian Mission at Lhasa, Trade Agencies at Gyantse, Yatung and Gartok, trade marts and the right to carry on trade at other places, post and telegraph offices, rest-houses, military escorts and pilgrim traffic. The Chinese agreed to the conversion of the Indian Mission at Lhasa into a Consulate in exchange for a Chinese Consulate in Bombay, but did not take up other questions for settlement. They were still bogged down in Korea. (*My Years with Nehru*, p. 149)

In June 1952, there was an official announcement in New Delhi that the Indian Mission in Lhasa was henceforth to be designated as Consulate-General and the three Trade Agencies at Gyantse, Yatung and Gartok were to be under the general supervision of the Indian Consulate at Lhasa. In the press communique, it was declared that the change in status resulted from the fact that the foreign relations of Tibet were currently conducted by the People’s Republic of China (on the basis of the Sino-Tibetan Agreement of May, 1951).

INDIAN PROPOSAL FOR TALKS CONCERNING TIBET

In September 1952, the Government of India approached the People’s Government of China with a proposal for negotiations regarding the outstanding questions concerning Tibet. In November 1953, there were discussions in the External Affairs

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Ministry in New Delhi in which it was decided that the question of the Indo-Tibetan boundary was not to be raised in the forthcoming conference with China in Peking. In the Foreign Affairs debate in the House of the People on December 24, 1953, Nehru said :

“As this House knows very well, I have declared in answer to a question that, so far as we are concerned, there is nothing to discuss about the frontier. The McMahon Line is there. We have nothing to discuss with anybody, the Chinese Government or others. We will not discuss frontier problems and it is not an issue at all to be discussed. So far as the McMahon Line is concerned, it was fixed long ago, although it is not fixed in the sense of putting up stone pillars.”

SINO-INDIAN CONFERENCE ON TIBETAN TRADE AND INTER-COURSE, DECEMBER 1953—APRIL 1954

The Conference opened in Peking on December 31, 1953. Premier Chou En-lai, at the first meeting, said that the relations between China and India were becoming closer every day and that from among the outstanding questions the two sides could settle the questions which were ripe for settlement. The Indian Ambassador then pointed out that there were only small questions pending between India and China, but he wished to see nothing, big or small, remaining outstanding between the two countries. Premier Chou En-lai replied that two large countries like India and China, with a long common frontier, were bound to have some questions but all could be settled smoothly (*White Paper*, No. III, p. 91). During the negotiations, neither side referred directly to the border problem.

The Agreement “on Trade and Intercourse between the Tibet Region of China and India” was signed on April 29, 1954. In it, India gave up all the extra-territorial rights which the British Government of India had exercised in Tibet by virtue of the Anglo-Tibetan Trade Regulations (which were born out of the abortive Simla Convention and hence could not be treated as

legally valid). The new agreement provided that the Government of India would retain its Consulate at Lhasa and the Trade Agencies at Gyantse, Yatung and Gartok and, reciprocally, the Chinese government would be entitled to establish Trade Agencies in New Delhi, Calcutta and Kalimpong. The Agreement specified six mountain passes (*viz.* Ship Ki Pass, Mana Pass, Niti Pass, Kungri Bingri Pass, Darma Pass, Lipulekh Pass) which could be used by traders and pilgrims for their journey. By a concurrent exchange of Notes, the Government of India agreed to withdraw the small military detachment of 300 soldiers which it had maintained at Gyantse since the withdrawal of the Youghusband Expedition (1904) (for the protection of the trade routes between India and Tibet). It also agreed to hand over to the Chinese government, against payment, the post and telegraph installations which India had been operating in Tibet since 1904. In the event, India later handed over these installations to the Government of China free of charge.

It is important to note that the border passes regulating the flow of trans-Himalayan trade and pilgrimage mentioned in the 1954 Agreement were all in the Central sector of the border. There was no reference to the border passes in the eastern sector of the frontier and the Chinese also kept silent on the issue, which can be read as tacit acceptance of the McMahon Line by them. (As early as July 1914, Sir Henry McMahon had suggested in his secret memorandum to the Viceroy the opening of a new route for Tibetan trade through the eastern frontier from Odalgiri Tawang to Lhasa, which was the shortest road between India and Lhasa). The Indian side tried to raise the subject of border marts in western Tibet for the benefit of Ladakhi traders, but, according to B. N. Mullik, "...the Chinese delegate would not discuss the question of trade marts in Western Tibet on the ground that this related to Kashmir which was under dispute between India and Pakistan." (*My Years with Nehru*, p. 153)

CONCLUSIONS

A historical study of the Sino-Indian Agreement shows that a new Treaty relating to Tibetan trade and intercourse was naturally incumbent upon the Government of India since Decembet 30, 1949, when it extended recognition to the People's Republic of China. Nehru and his closest advisers, K. M. Panikkar and V. K. Krishna Menon, clearly understood that the Revolution in China was a world-shaking event and that India's newly powerful neighbour was not to be trifled with, as had been possible during the days of the Kuomintang when China sank in the depths of corruption and civil strife. They knew that the undue privileges in Tibet enjoyed by the British were based only on the secret Anglo-Tibetan Trade Regulations of 1914, concluded without the knowledge of the Chinese. The real choice was either to relinquish these privileges voluntarily or to risk forcible expulsion from Tibet. The Indian Political Mission set up in 1936 at Lhasa was, as Panikkar accepted in his conversation with Chou En-lai, "an office of dubious legality". Krishna Menon, speaking to the British and Indian pressmen at a luncheon on August 15, 1950 in London, said :

"India's position in Tibet was rather peculiar. She was the only country represented at the Tibetan capital. But the Indian representative was there in an 'undefined capacity' and was more or less successor of the original British representative who 'strayed into Tibet and stayed there' ". (*The Hindu*, August 17, 1950).

Panikkar wrote in 1955 : "I knew that with a Communist China cordial and intimate relations were out of question, but I was fairly optimistic about working out an area of co-operation by eliminating causes of misunderstanding, rivalry, etc. The only area where our interest overlapped was in Tibet, and knowing the importance that every Chinese Government, including the Kuomintang, had attached to exclusive Chinese authority over the area, I had, even before I started for Peking, come to the conclusion that the British policy (which we were supposed to have inherited) of looking upon Tibet as an area in which we have special political interests *could not be maintained*. (*In Two Chinas*, p. 102).

From October 1950 to July 1953, the People's Government of China was involved in the Korean War against the United Nation's army, led by the U. S., and India was also busy, involved as a peace-broker between the contending sides inside and outside the United Nations. That is how an unequal treaty based on the abortive Simla Convention continued to operate in relation to Tibet for some time. Also, there was a powerful group among the officials of the Indian External Affairs Ministry, led by the Secretary-General, G. S. Bajpai, who thought that all the special rights and privileges which had accrued to India from the British Raj since 1914 and under which Tibet had the status of a buffer state within the Indian sphere of influence could somehow still be continued, in spite of the changed balance of power in Asia. These officials enjoyed the support of the Deputy Prime Minister, Sardar Patel. Their influence explains the exchange of acrimonious letters between India and China during October to December, 1950. The debate in the U.N. Steering Committee showed that no Great Power was ready to sponsor the Tibetan claim to sovereignty and charge of aggression against Communist China. There followed the Sino-Tibetan Treaty in May 1951, and then the regularisation of the Indian Mission in Lhasa in June 1952 as a Consulate under the Indian Embassy in Peking. The establishment of a permanent listening post in Lhasa which had for long been a forbidden city to foreigners, was the major benefit accruing to India as a result of Nehru's policy of friendship with China, based on a sane assessment of the changing power realities in Asia in the context of the Korean War. Both sides had to wait till the Korean armistice in July, 1953 before they could start formal negotiations over the regularisation of the arrangements in Tibet.

The preamble to the Sino-Indian Agreement, containing the "Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence—(i) mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty; (ii) mutual non-aggression; (iii) mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs; (iv) equality and mutual benefit; and (v) peaceful co-existence—originated during the process of negotiations. There was implicit reference in (i) and (iv) to the declara-

tion of basic principles of state policy by Mao Tsetung on October 1, 1949. There was reference to "both countries recognising each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and mutual interests" in the Government of India's Note to the People's Government of China on October 31, 1950. (There was no mention of equality in this, as it also contained a list of extra-territorial rights inherited by India from the British Raj in Tibet). Points 2 and 3 provided a sort of reassurance of China's peaceful intent towards India. Peaceful co-existence was the common desire of both sides.

It is to be noted that there was a duality in the Indian attitude to the Simla Convention of 1914. Nehru was agreeable to disowning the extra-territorial rights in Tibet inherited from the abortive Simla Convention. On the other hand, he was determined to maintain the McMahon Line of the Simla Convention as India's north-eastern frontier with China. Nehru, therefore, as we know, decided against bringing the frontier problem into the agenda for the Tibetan treaty negotiations, in spite of the urging of G. S. Bajpai and other officials. There were well thought out reasons for this. Nehru told the Rajya Sabha (Council of States) on December 9, 1959 that, in the Sino-Indian Agreement of April 29, 1954, while India was merely accepting the reality of the Chinese occupation of Tibet...which she was not in a position to alter—the raising of the claim to the McMahon Line border across the table would have led to a demand for a *quid pro quo* by Communist China (on the basis of the Chinese [K.M.T.] Note rejecting the McMahon Line as late as November 18, 1949).

THE McMAHON LINE 1914-45 : THE BRITISH LEGACY

INTRODUCTION

In 1913 the British convoked a conference at Simla ; the Tibetans attending willingly, the Chinese under constraint.¹ The purpose of the British Government in this conference was to extend and formalize the *de facto* independence which Tibet had begun to enjoy in 1912 as a result of the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty, and of the consequent turmoil in China : Tibet would thus be maintained as a buffer state between India and China. This the British hoped to achieve by making the Chinese accept a zonal division of Tibet into "Inner" (from Peking's point of view) and "Outer" regions. (The Russians had obtained China's acquiescence in a similar division of Mongolia in 1913.) The British aim suited Tibetan aspirations, and the British and the Tibetans worked throughout the Conference in closest co-operation, not far short, indeed, of collusion.

The Simla Conference was a total failure so far as this principal aim was concerned. China would not agree to a draft convention, drawn up by the British, which looked to the zonal partition of Tibet, and refused to allow their representative in Simla to sign the draft. The proposed division would have entailed withdrawal of Chinese administration from certain areas and the Chinese based their objection upon this. Against both the spirit and the letter of his instructions, the British representative, Sir Henry McMahon (the Foreign Secretary of the Government of India), proceeded to sign with the Tibetans a secret declaration that the draft convention would be binding upon their two Governments. An explicit instruction from London forbidding McMahon to take this step—*i.e.*, to sign a bi-partite agreement with the Tibetans—was delayed, and McMahon was able to sign the declaration before he received it.² Accepting, however, the *fait accompli*, London gave retrospective approval to McMahon's action.

Although the whole context of the Simla Conference was the need, recognized in London, to keep Chinese power away from the borders of India, the delimitation³ of those borders was not among the purposes of the Conference—at least not so far as the Government in London was concerned. It seems likely, however, that the Government of India had from the first intended to get an agreement on a new Indo-Tibetan boundary out of the Simla Conference. The recent moves of the Chinese General, Chao Erh-feng, near the north-eastern frontier had alarmed them, and it was natural that they would be more alive to local strategic concerns than to the broader interests of the home Government. At all events the British in India did use the Simla Conference to obtain Tibetan agreement to a new boundary alignment, advancing the limits of the British territory from a line along the foot of the hills to the crest-line of the Assam Himalayas, some 60 miles to the north. Such a boundary would not only put a wide swathe of tribal no-man's land within India; but would also annex a salient of Tibetan territory, adjacent to Bhutan, which ran right down to the plains—the Tawang Tract. (The military in India had been urging a rectification of the boundary in this sector since June 1912).⁴

The record suggests that no clear intimation of this intention was ever given to the Foreign Office in London—which might well have judged such an attempt to be against Britain's wider interests, and forbidden it.

The Indian Government opened bilateral negotiations with the Tibetans in Delhi in February-March 1914 (the conferees having retreated from the Simla winter) with the object of securing Tibetan agreement to the proposed alignment. Because the Chinese were not included in or informed of these exchanges, they were, in fact, in breach of the 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention which had bound the two parties not to negotiate with Tibet "except through the intermediary of the Chinese Government." Another recent treaty, the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1906, had bound Britain "not to annex Tibetan territory." Accordingly, the purpose and content of these exchanges had to be kept secret, and not only from the Chinese.

The Anglo-Tibetan exchanges, conducted on the British side by Charles Bell, Political Officer in Sikkim, resulted in an exchange of letters, dated 24-25 March 1914, in which both sides agreed to a new boundary, running along the crest-line of the Assam Himalayas, and thus annexing the Tawang Tract to British India. The boundary was not described in the letters, but these referred to a map, in two sheets, which was sealed and exchanged with the letters. The boundary—which came to be known as the McMahon Line—was drawn on this map. It seems likely that the Chinese, whose intelligence in India was good, learned of the Anglo-Tibetan exchanges, though they might well not have known exactly what was involved; at all events, both in Simla and in London they declared formally, emphatically and repeatedly that China would not recognize any bilateral agreement between Tibet and Britain.

In the last act of the abortive Simla Conference, McMahon attempted to obtain China's tacit—indeed unwitting—approval of his new and still secret agreement with the Tibetans. On the map on which the proposed zonal division of Tibet had been drawn, the boundary of "Inner" Tibet and China was shown in red; that line curved round in its southern extension to show what would have been the boundary between *Tibet and India*—and in that sector it followed the alignment which McMahon had agreed with the Tibetans. Thus if China had agreed to a zonal division of Tibet (illustrated on this same map with a blue line) it might have been argued that in so doing she had also accepted the McMahon Line. Since, in fact, China did not agree, and did not sign the Convention (indeed repudiated it) the point remained academic. But Sir Henry McMahon's abortive diplomatic sleight of hand is the only basis upon which it can be argued that China did accept the McMahon Line.

Another by-product of the Conference had been a new Anglo-Tibetan agreement on trade—also reached and formalized without the knowledge of the Chinese.

Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy, forwarded McMahon's report on the Simla Conference (his Final Memorandum) to London on 23 July, 1914. This, it seems, was the first—or anyway the first

formal—intimation the home Government had received about the Indian Government's dealings with the Tibetans over the "McMahon" section of the Tibet-India border—and McMahon's achievements in this regard were presented tentatively, even with diffidence :

".....we recognise that a consideration of the eastern or Indo-Chinese portion of the North-Eastern Frontier did not form part of the functions of the Conference ; and we would therefore request that the views and proposals put forward [in Enclosure 5 to McMahon's Final Memorandum] may be regarded as personal to Sir Henry McMahon, and not at present carrying the endorsement of the Government of India. As soon as we have time to examine this enclosure we shall address Your Lordship separately with reference to various points raised therein."⁵

As far as can be discovered from the record, Hardinge never followed up his closing sentence.

McMahon's successor made the following observation a year later : ".....The fact [is] that the negotiations conducted last year in Simla broke down simply and solely because the Government of India attempted to secure for Tibet greater advantages than the Chinese Government were prepared to concede...[being] unduly anxious to secure the best terms they could for Tibet."⁶

He also noted that Charles Bell's recitation of the advantages that would accrue to Britain under the Simla Convention was "purely academic, since [it] has not been signed by the Chinese Government or accepted by the Russian Government and is, therefore, for the present invalid."⁷

While thus regarding the Simla Convention as invalid, the Indian Government did put into effect the trade regulations McMahon had drawn up with the Tibetans. The McMahon Line itself, however, was wholly a dead letter.

1928 : PUBLICATION OF AITCHISON'S "TREATIES"

The question of the Simla Conference came up again in official correspondence in 1928, in connexion with a proposed new edition

of *Aitchison's Treaties*.⁸ This was the official record of all "Treaties, Engagements and Sanads relating to India and Neighbouring Countries," and when it came to compiling a new edition it was seen that the passage covering the Simla Conference posed some problems. The Indian Government explained these, and their solution, to London :

"..... 2. Explicit reference to the Trade Regulations signed in consequence of the..... [Simla] Convention of 1914...has been purposely omitted. The reasons for doing so are as follows.

"3. At the Simla Conference in 1914...a Convention was initialled by all the Plenipotentiaries ; but the Chinese Plenipotentiary refused to proceed to full signature of the Convention. The British and the Tibetan Governments, however, secretly signed a Declaration recognising the Convention as binding on their Governments. As a consequence of this mutual recognition of the Convention.....Trade Regulations were signed in 1914 between the British and the Tibetan Governments...

"In 1925 His Majesty's Government agreed that the Trade Regulations of 1914 should be regarded as being in force, but they should not be made public...

"4. At first sight it would appear advisable to complete the account of the facts by including these Trade Regulations in *Aitchison's Treaties*, but, if this were done, a short account of the Tri-Partite Convention and its secret history would have to be given. In view of the possibility that publication now of the Declaration (though it seems unlikely that China is still unaware of its existence) may force her to take overt notice of it, and so afford a fresh handle for anti-British propaganda, the Government of India think that it is on the whole most prudent to treat the matter [as follows]."⁹

Volume XIV of the new, 1929 edition of *Aitchison's Treaties* (the first to deal with the period covered by the Simla negotiations) accordingly said of the Simla Conference only this :

"In 1913 a conference of Tibetan, Chinese and British Plenipotentiaries met in India to try and bring about a settlement in regard to matters on the Sino-Tibetan frontier ; and a tripartite Convention was drawn up and initialled in 1914. The

Chinese Government, however, refused to permit their Plenipotentiary to proceed to full signature."¹⁰

There was no reference to the Anglo-Tibetan trade regulations signed in 1914. The record referred only to the previous (1908) regulations, which the British had drawn up *with China* (and Tibet), and added : "The [1908] regulations were subject to revision after 10 years ; but though certain modifications were made as a result of the abortive Tri-Partite Convention of 1914, they still remain the basis of the Indo-Tibetan trade arrangements."¹¹ (It may be noted that the 1908 regulations put trade marts in Tibet under the administration of the Chinese officials.)

By this time, the Tsarist Government having been overthrown, and the Soviet Government having repudiated all Tsarist treaties, the 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention was no longer an inhibiting factor in Britain's dealings with Tibet. There was, however, a new treaty which should have inhibited such relations, since by the Washington Treaty of 1922 Britain had bound herself not to "transgress upon the territorial and administrative integrity of China."

While the officially published record of the Simla Conference was thus at this time accurate—if not wholly frank—an alternative, and indeed contrary, version was already being advanced by the British participants in the Conference. In 1924 Charles Bell (now Sir Charles, and retired) published his *Tibet Past and Present*, which said this of the Simla Conference :

"The opportunity was also taken [at Simla] to negotiate the frontier to be established between Tibet and North-Eastern India...[and] it proved fortunately possible to establish [this] over eight hundred and fifty miles of difficult and dangerous country. We have thus gained a frontier standing back everywhere about a hundred miles from the plains of India."¹²

Bell's confident assumption that he and his superior, McMahan, had thus gained India a new frontier was not shared at the time, however, by either New Delhi or London.

In the meantime, another volume of *Aitchison's Treaties* was issued in 1931, dealing specifically with Assam, and this confirmed that the Tawang Tract in at least its northern reaches was under Tibetan administration :

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“...east of Bhutan is the Mon-yul (low country), a name applied by the Tibetans to a portion of the North-East Frontier about 2,000 square miles in extent, bounded by Bhutan on the west, by the Miji and Aka Hills on the east, and separated from Tibet by a range of mountains averaging 16,000 feet in height. The people inhabiting this area are called by the Tibetans Monba (inhabitants of low country). The Monbas living north of the Se La range are under Tibetan administration.”¹³

In fact, Tibetan administration extended well to the south of the Se La range. There was some doubt as to its exact limits, and confusion over whether the tribes in the triangle south of the Se La range were within Tibet's sphere or Assam's. In 1935, however, F. Williamson, the then Political Officer in Sikkim, was of the opinion that delimitation of Bhutan's eastern boundary was a matter between Bhutan and Tibet; this shows that the British Officer most closely concerned with the area accepted that the whole Tawang area was Tibetan. In fact, “Williamson thought that in the Assam sector the international frontier ran along the foothills, and was identical with the frontier of the administered districts of...Assam.”¹⁴

1935 : THE RE-APPEARANCE OF THE McMAHON LINE

Meanwhile, in 1935, an incident occurred which led to the reversal of British frontier policy in the North-East. A well-known British explorer and botanist, Captain Kingdon Ward, who had made several treks in Tibet, with official permission, now re-entered Tibet through the Tawang Tract—without the approval of the Lhasa authorities. When Tibetan officials learnt of his unauthorized presence they ordered his arrest, and complained to Williamson who was then visiting Lhasa. Kingdon Ward claimed that he had been authorized to enter Tibet by the Tibetan official (Dzongpon) in charge of Tawang.

The British were already exercised by evidence of renewed Chinese interest—and activities—in Tibet, and so were in a frame of mind to take a more vigorous and “forward” approach to the question of the north-eastern boundary. The Kingdon Ward case

was the catalyst. The matter came to the desk of Mr. O.K. Caroe, then a Deputy Secretary in the Foreign and Political Department in the Government of India. Caroe's subsequent zeal in the cause of an advanced north-eastern boundary would perhaps justify a renaming of this sector as the McMahon-Caroe or even the Caroe-McMahon Line.¹⁶ On hearing that the Tibetans had arrested Kingdon Ward on the charge of illegal entry, Caroe called for the papers on the boundary alignment and, "with considerable difficulty and almost by chance," as he put it,¹⁶ "unearth[ed] the true position"—discovered, that is, the secret agreements that McMahon had made with the Tibetans 22 years before.

On the strength of his investigations, Caroe telegraphed Williamson (still in Lhasa) on 5 November 1935 that the "international frontier between India and Tibet east of Bhutan...was defined by Red Line on map drawn by McMahon and accepted by Tibetan Government in accordance with article IX of 1914 Convention.¹⁷ This line lies well north of Tawang and it is not understood why Tibetans maintain Dzungpon at Tawang who grants authority to enter Tibet. Are you sure that Kingdon Ward actually went or is alleged by Tibetans to have gone to Tibetan side of Red Line referred to above or have you any reason to suppose that agreement come to in 1914 has been modified by practice or otherwise since that date. It is important that you should not in any way compromise with the Tibetan Government validity of international boundary agreed to in 1914."¹⁸

This telegram was also sent to the Government of Assam, whose views were sought on the contents.

Caroe, who appears to have been already building up a case, had put his reference to the Red Line within a leading question, and the Tibetans fell into the trap. Caroe's telegram was answered by Captain Battye, the British trade agent at Gyantse, then in Lhasa, Williamson having fallen ill there and died. Battye replied: "Tibetan Government allege that Kingdon Ward went far beyond the Red Line...They maintain that Red Line has not been modified."¹⁹

The Assam Government commented on 13 November 1935 on Caroe's message to Williamson, in these terms:

“As regards the connection of Tawang with Tibet, the Governor in-Council believes that Tawang is more or less independent territory, but holds some indirect allegiance to Tibet. The position is partly explained at page 100 of Volume XII of *Aitchison's Treaties* [see passage quoted above]. It may be that owing to this indirect connection with Tibet the Dzungpons of Tawang consider that they had an authority to grant Mr. Kingdon Ward permission to enter Tibet. So far as information goes, there has been no change in recent years in the attitude of the Tibetan Government in respect of their part of the frontier.”²⁰

This is curious. Caroe himself stated after this (on 9 April 1936) that, “while the Burma Government were informed of the location of this frontier [*i.e.*, the McMahon Line] the Assam Government apparently were forgotten and seem to have had no intimation up to this day.”²¹ But in November 1935 the Assam Government was writing to New Delhi as if it were fully aware of the McMahon alignment of the frontier. It seems from this that Caroe must have been mistaken about Assam not having been informed (a possibility remains, however, that the Assam Government, taking the hint from Caroe’s warning to Williamson that the 1914 alignment should not be compromised, and responding by helping Caroe build up his case for the forward frontier, was here claiming earlier knowledge than in fact it had).

At the end of November Caroe followed up by writing to Captain Battye :

“Under Article 9 of the 1914 Convention, the frontier between Tibet and India was clearly defined, and left to India the entire Tawang area of the hill country east of Bhutan...Indeed the agreement then reached carries India’s frontier right up into the heart of the Himalayas to a line at least 60 miles north [of the foot of the hills].”

Caroe went on to recount the origins of the McMahon Line (with no suggestion, of course, that there was anything covert about it) and then picked up Battye’s own report that the Tibetans “maintain that the Red Line has not been modified.”

“...the Tibetan Government have just re-affirmed this [Red] Line and say that it has not been modified. It appears therefore

that Tibet could not in any case put forward a claim to sovereignty over any territory in the foothills east of Bhutan, it seems therefore unnecessary that the present issue should be clouded by any fear of presentation or acceptance of such a claim in this region on behalf of Tibet. ...”²³

Again Caroe sent a copy of this to the Assam Government, seeking comment, which (dated 7 December 1935) read in part as follows :

“The Assam Government accept, as correctly stated, the position explained in your...letter to Captain Battye...We have always in these late years taken the McMahon Line to be the Tibet boundary and we are not aware of any claim to the area south of that line since 1914.”²³

On the face of it, this is untrue. Apart from Caroe’s own assertion on this point, and Williamson’s belief that Assam—and therefore India—ended at the foot of the hills, there are the maps issued by the official Survey of India up to this time. No map had shown a boundary on the McMahon alignment ; when these maps showed the north-eastern boundary, they put it in the vicinity of the foot of the hills.

Not surprisingly perhaps, Captain Battye also agreed with his superior in the capital : “I agree with you,” he wrote back to Caroe on 13 December 1935, “that so far as Tibet is concerned there appears to be no cause for concern at all ...”²⁴

Caroe then wrote identical letters to the Assam Government and to Basil Gould, who had replaced Williamson as political Officer, Sikkim. He asked, “...whether any measure of political control has been extended up to that [Red] Line in the course of the last 20 years, and in particular whether the Tibetan Government honour the frontier by refraining from administrative measures such as the collection of revenue on the Indian side of the frontier, more specially in the Tawang area.”²⁵

Caroe noted that “the external frontiers of India have [not] been correctly shown on maps of the Survey of India.”

In this year, 1935, Henry McMahon gave his own account of the origin of the boundary alignment which came to bear his name. Retired soon after the First World War, McMahon who

had been closely associated with the Royal Society of Arts, London, for many years, devoted his Presidential address (1935-36) to the subject of "International Boundaries". In this he claimed that India's north-east boundary had been defined by a "Treaty between England, China and Tibet of 1914." This was disingenuous ; McMahon knew better than anyone that he had failed to obtain China's adherence to the Simla Convention.²⁶

Until the end of 1935, so far as can be seen from the record, Caroe's efforts to resuscitate the McMahon Line had only been within the Indian Government. In April 1936, the subject was now put to Whitehall. In a personal letter to J. C. Walton, head of the Political (External) Department of the India Office, Caroe summarized his version of the circumstances pertaining to the north eastern frontier. He assured Walton that the Tibetan Government was fully aware of, and fully accepted, the McMahon Line, but went on :

"The body of officers to whom the international position in the north-east frontier is known is in any case a small one and it seems to us that there is a real danger that important matters of this kind may go wrong if we refrain any longer from publishing our agreements with Tibet. It is true that a new crisis in Tibetan affairs seems to be upon us, but even so the Government of India think there would be advantage in inserting in their public records copies of the 1914 Convention, the exchange of notes on the boundary between Sir Henry McMahon and the Tibetan Government, and the Trade Regulations. Their absence from such a publication as *Aitchison's Treaties*, if it became known to the Chinese Government, might well be used by them in support of the argument that no ratified agreement between India and Tibet is in existence. Further reasons for reaffirming our engagement with Tibet on this frontier are supplied by the necessity of defining in connection with the new Constitution the tribal areas on the north-east, and by the separation of Burma, which is responsible for a part of this frontier.

"We therefore feel strongly that no time should be lost in inserting in *Aitchison's Treaties* the text of the 1914 Anglo-Tibetan Convention together with the exchange of notes regarding the

boundary and the Trade Regulations...We think that steps should be taken without delay to show this boundary on the maps of the Survey of India. Omission to do this has already led to the delineation of the frontier between India and Tibet in the Assam sector (in e.g. The Times Atlas) along the foot of the hills to correspond with the boundary of the Assam Province.”²⁷

Eight days later Caroe followed this up in another letter to Walton. Since his first letter, he said, his attention had been drawn to the account of the McMahon Line given in 1924 by Charles Bell in his *Tibet Past and Present* (see above). “As the matter received publicity in this book,” Caroe now wrote, “we feel that additional force is given to the argument that we should not delay any longer in getting this frontier into our Treaty Publications and on to our maps. Gould [Political Officer, Sikkim], with whom we have since discussed this matter is insistent that this action should be taken without further loss of time...”²⁸

Whitehall, however, viewed matters differently and Walton does not appear to have been fully convinced. After six weeks of high-level consultations between the India Office and the Foreign Office, he wrote on 16 July to Caroe :

“...subject to the following points the Secretary of State approves the Government of India’s proposals :

“(a) We are not clear whether the Government of India contemplate a re-issue of Volume XIV of *Aitchison’s Treaties* in the immediate future. Would it not suffice to arrange for the publication of agreements when the next edition of Aitchison’s Series is produced in the normal course? In either case the Survey of India maps could show the frontier correctly forthwith.

“(b) When the agreements are published it will be most desirable to avoid unnecessary publicity and to refrain from drawing the attention of the press or news agencies to the publication.

“(c) The Secretary of State considers that it would be desirable not to publish the text of the Declaration of 3 July 1914 by the Plenipotentiaries of Great Britain and Tibet accepting the Simla Convention as binding on their two Governments, but to deal with it merely by means of a note to be inserted in Aitchison in the

sense suggested at the end of para 4 of the letter to the Foreign Office of 13 June 1936. [The wording in that letter runs thus : whereas the Simla Convention itself after being initialled by the Chinese Plenipotentiary was not signed or ratified by the Chinese Government, it was accepted as binding between the two other parties as between themselves.]”⁸⁰

The Government of India now switched to higher level in pursuing the correspondence. Walton’s letter was answered by the Foreign Secretary, Sir Aubrey Metcalfe, on 17 August :

“...I am to say that immediate steps are being taken to move the Surveyor-General to show the international frontier of India in this sector of Survey of India maps. As regards the suggestion that we should await the re-issue of Volume XIV of the *Aitchison Treaties* before publishing the 1914 Convention and connected agreements thereunder, it is necessary to point out that this publication ordinarily would not come under revision for the next 15 or 20 years. It therefore seems necessary to proceed to bring out a revised edition of this volume only with as little delay as possible, and it is proposed to do this.

“2. The Government of India are in full agreement with the suggestions made in paragraphs (b) and (c) of your letter.”⁸⁰

On the same day, in an official letter from the Government of India to the India Office, it was also proposed that Basil Gould, who would be shortly visiting Lhasa, should raise the matter of Tibetan administrative control and collection of revenue for purely civil purposes in the Tawang area. At the same time it was suggested that he should obtain from the Tibetan Government a written re-affirmation of the 1914 frontier. The Government of India further suggested that a protest be made to China about Chinese maps. The generality of these showed the boundary along the foot of the hills—which the Government of India represented as a cartographical encroachment.⁸¹

The India Office agreed that Gould should make the approach to the Tibetans but, together with the Foreign Office, had serious reservations about making a protest to the Chinese :

“...It is, however, thought preferable on the whole that such a protest should not be made, as it would be likely to lead

to an undesirable discussion with the Chinese Government regarding the validity of the 1914 Agreements, and possibly to an increased Chinese interest in the tribal territories on the northern border of Assam. Moreover, if, as His Majesty's Government assume, the "Shen Pao" Atlas is not an official publication of the Chinese Government, it would be open to the Chinese Government to reply to any representations to the effect that they are not responsible for the activities of the private cartographers, and *they could, in any case, quote the manner in which the boundary is shown on British maps including the map printed in the present edition of the India Office List.* The latter will be corrected in future editions.

"2. Of course in the event of the Chinese Government asserting their claim to the tribal territory on the northern border of Assam by means other than the publication of maps, the question of representation to them might require reconsideration."⁸²

In a demi-official letter of 15 October 1936 to Metcalfe (by then Foreign Secretary, Government of India), Walton wrote that regarding the publication of the 1914 Agreements regarding Tibet, the India Office agreed "to the issue as soon as possible of a revised edition of Volume XIV of *Aitchison's Treaties*."⁸³

Meanwhile Basil Gould was in Lhasa, engaged in political discussions with the Tibetan Cabinet, the Kashag. In November 1936, he saw the opportunity to raise the subject of the McMahon Line. On 15 November he reported to Metcalfe :

"The Kashag at an interview raised the question of the Tehri border. This gave me a convenient opening of mentioning Tawang. I said that the Kashag were doubtless fully aware of the terms of the 1914 Convention of 3 July 1914 which, under the Declaration of the same date, had been acknowledged to be binding on the Governments of Great Britain and Tibet. Under this Convention, Tibet had no claim to any territory to the south of the Red Line which had been drawn to the north of Tawang. The Kashag, who had no warning that the subject of Tawang was likely to be raised, replied promptly that they were fully aware of the terms of the Convention but that

"(1) upto 1914 Tawang had undoubtedly been Tibetan,

“(2) they regarded the adjustment of the Tibet-Indian boundary as part and parcel of the general adjustment and determination of boundaries contemplated in the Convention. If they could with our (British) help, secure a definite Sino-Tibetan boundary they would of course be glad to observe the Indo-Tibetan border as defined in 1914,

“(3) they have been encouraged in thinking that His Majesty's Government and the Government of India sympathized with this way of regarding the matter owing to the fact that at no time since the Convention and Declaration of 1914 had the Indian Government taken steps to question Tibetan, or assert British, authority in the Tawang area.”⁸⁴

Gould's report produced a sharp reaction in New Delhi. A telegram from the Foreign and Political Department on 8 December told Gould that the “attitude of the Kashag is wholly untenable,” and went on :

“...you should point out that the Indo-Tibetan frontier was separately agreed to by exchange of Notes 24 and 25 March 1914. Moreover, Tibetan Government indicated adherence to McMahon Line in connection with Kingdon Ward case as recently as November 1935...On neither occasion was there any suggestion that Tibetan Government's observance of McMahon Line was dependent on securing definite Sino-Tibetan boundary.”⁸⁵

But Gould had some more cold water to pour on New Delhi's approach :

“It appears on close examination [he replied] that it is improbable that Kashag made any useful admission on the occasion of interview with Battye on Kingdon Ward case.

“I apprehend if at present stage I were to suggest a written reaffirmation, my action would tend to create impression that we ourselves feel that engagement of 1914 stands in need of reaffirmation; and it is practically certain that Tibetan Government would decline to reaffirm especially in writing, except after references to Regent, Prime Minister, National Assembly and Monasteries, who were signatories to Declaration of 3 July 1914. China would in one way or another be likely to make capital out of such requirements and opportunity would be given to Tibetan

Government to attempt to attach to negotiations for reaffirmation all sorts of request vis-a-vis China."

Gould concluded by recommending that "the best method of dealing with the anomalous *de facto* position in Tawang will be by definite action on our part, backed by reiteration of oral explanation here of our indubitable rights rather than raising the question of reaffirmation."⁸⁰

Gould returned from Lhasa to Sikkim in February 1937, and at about the same time Caroe went to London, on furlough. There he continued his efforts on behalf of the McMahon Line. He followed up a meeting with R. A. Butler, then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for India—in which it appears he had *not* mentioned the subject of the north-east frontier—with this letter, dated 4 March 1937 :

"I ought to have mentioned rather an important point, when we were discussing the impact of Far Eastern Affairs on India: Owing mainly to our failure to publish the 1914 agreement with Tibet relative to the Indo-Tibetan frontier beyond Assam and Burma, Chinese cartographers have absorbed in China a slice of India some 500 miles long and 100 miles in depth, and included this slice, together with a huge mass of territory which is really Tibet, in an imaginary Chinese south-western province which they call Sikang (not to be confused with Singkiang and you will find other names).

"They have also created an imaginary Chinese Province out of what is really North Eastern Tibet and call it Kokonor or Chinghai. This does not immediately affect Indian territory, but it is in pursuance of the Chinese custom of pretending that a state of affairs exists, so persuading so many people as possible that it does exist. From similar motive the Soviet authorities set up Uzbekistan, Turkomanistan etc. on the Afghan frontier.

"This is not all. Owing to our omissions you will even find that our unofficial cartographers, e.g. the Times and Bartholomew's Atlases support the Chinese claims to chunks of India, and show the international frontier right down on the Brahmaputra at the foot of the Himalayas.

"This is a typical result of British, or British-Indian apathy in

all matters affecting the North-East, as apart from the North-West Frontier and is an instance of the lack of contact between Whitehall, Delhi and Peiping in Far Eastern Affairs.

“After the Chinese, Who ?

“It is worth remembering too that the creation of a separate Burma, setting up as it will two British authorities vis-a-vis China and Tibet, must complicate appreciations of future dangers, and will make it more than necessary to keep awake.”...⁸⁷

This prodding by Caroe apparently moved Butler to seek information in the matter from Walton who, on 13 March 1937, wrote in a minute :

“The Simla Convention of 1914, which lay [sic] down the true frontier between India and Tibet, including that part of the latter which is now claimed by China, were not published on account (at the time) of complication arising from the Anglo Russian Convention of 1907, and subsequently in order to avoid stimulating Chinese interest in Tibet. These reasons have now ceased to be valid, and it was decided last autumn to publish them in a revised edition of Volume XIV of *Aitchison's Treaties* to be brought out specially for the purpose. The true frontier is also to be shown on maps published by the Survey of India. Since Mr. Caroe spoke to me on this subject we have asked the Government of India to send either direct or through the India Office copies of the new Survey of India maps to the leading firms of cartographers in this country, and draw their attention to the point. The Royal Geographical Society and War Office will also be informed. The map in the India Office List has already been corrected in this year's edition.”⁸⁸

In May of the same year New Delhi sought the views of the Governor of Assam, then Sir Robert Reid, on policy concerning Tawang. He replied that while Tawang had doubtless been British since 1914, “it has been controlled by Tibet, and none of the inhabitants have any idea that they are not Tibetan subjects.” Reid then proposed that a European police officer with an escort of at least a platoon should be sent to Tawang the following spring, to stay for the summer, and return annually. The officer concerned should be “impressed with the great importance of

tactful behaviour towards the inhabitants," Reid went on, and should assure the owners of estates in the area that their rights would be respected, and the monks that the Tibetan Government would be consulted whenever a new Head Lama was appointed. New Delhi agreed that a small expedition should go to Tawang, under a British officer, "examine the country, get into touch with the inhabitants, and form some estimate of its revenue possibilities." This should be preliminary, however, to any final decision about the policy towards the area.³⁹

The arrival of the British expedition to Tawang, under Captain Lightfoot, occasioned a prompt protest from the Kashag to Gould. The Tibetans asked for immediate withdrawal of the expedition and flouted Lightfoot's authority by collecting taxes under his very nose.⁴⁰ Gould's earlier report, that the Tibetans regarded Tawang as their own and had no intention of relinquishing it, was thus amply confirmed. Lightfoot learned that the Tibetans planned to settle with the Bhutanese on the latter's eastern boundary, thus demonstrating their own sovereignty in the Tawang Tract⁴¹; the British readily checked this initiative, however, by instructing Bhutan not to enter into any such negotiations. By the treaty of 1910 Bhutan was bound to be guided by Britain in foreign affairs.⁴²

1938 : THE REVISION OF AITCHISON'S "TREATIES"

The British then attempted to persuade the Tibetans to give up their claims to Tawang. Gould having failed, the argument was taken up in Lhasa by one of Britain's local agents, Rai Bahadur Norbu Dhondup, who had no more success than had his superior. He reported to Gould on 26 August 1938 :

"So far as [sic] I have seen the Kashag not less than 9 times and the Regent 3 times about Tawang. All of them are afraid to come to a decision in the matter and the explanation given by them regarding the possible delay in going through the question is merely a pretence. As they said definitely that they want time to come to a decision, I am afraid it means that the matter will be

delayed for many months or years, as they have done in the case of the Tehri-Tibet boundary dispute, which has remained unsettled for many years....⁴⁸

While the Indian Government's attempt to get Lhasa to adhere to the 1914 agreement were thus bogged down in the limitless Tibetan capacity for procrastination, no such handicaps attended its falsification of the historical record. The revised edition of Volume XIV of *Aitchison's Treaties* was produced in August 1938. Except for the passages referring to the Simla Conference, the new edition was identical with the earlier edition it replaced—even to the date of publication on the flyleaf, which remained 1929. From the beginning Caroe and his colleagues in the Indian Government had been emphatic that the new edition should be produced and substituted for the old with the minimum publicity, and London had approved this course. Whether the India Office was aware that when those in New Delhi wrote about “minimum publicity” they intended to go so far as to produce what was in effect not far short of a diplomatic forgery, is unknown ; but anyway the only comment on the new edition registered in London seems to have been that the Indian Government had dealt with the problem of “unobtrusive” publication “quite satisfactorily.”⁴⁴ Sixty-two copies of the new volume were sent to the India Office in London, with the request that all copies of the original should be destroyed ; at least two volumes however, escaped this suppression, one in the Harvard University Library, the other in the India Office Records.⁴⁵

The object of this deception lay in the new volume's passage on the Simla Conference, which now read as follows :

“In 1913 a conference of British, Chinese and Tibetan Plenipotentiaries was convened in Simla in an attempt to negotiate an agreement as to the international status of Tibet with particular regard to the relations of the three Governments and to the frontier of Tibet both with China and India. After prolonged negotiations the conference under the presidency of Sir Henry McMahon drew up a tri-partite Convention between Great Britain, China and Tibet, which was initialled in Simla in 1914 by the representatives of the three parties. The Chinese Government,

however, refused to ratify the agreement, by their refusal depriving themselves of the benefits which they were to obtain thereunder, among which were a definite recognition that Tibet was under Chinese suzerainty, and an agreement to permit a Chinese official with a suitable escort not exceeding 300 men to be maintained in Lhasa. The Convention was, however, ratified by Great Britain and Tibet by means of a declaration accepting its terms as binding as between themselves.

“The Convention included a definition of boundary both on the Sino-Tibetan and the Indo-Tibetan frontier. On the Sino-Tibetan frontier a double boundary was laid down, the portion between the two boundaries being spoken of as Inner Tibet and that part of Tibet lying west of the westerly boundary as Outer Tibet.

“Owing to the failure of the Chinese Government to ratify, these boundaries, however, remained fluid. The other frontier between India and Tibet on the Assam and Burma borders, which was accepted by His Majesty’s Government and the Tibetan Government was laid down between the eastern border of Bhutan and the Isu Razi Pass on the Irrawady-Salween water-parting. West of the Brahmaputra bend this frontier for the most part follows the main axis of the Himalayas, and east of that point includes all tribal territory under the political control of Assam and Burma Governments. This frontier throughout stands back some 100 miles from the plains of India and Burma.

“A new set of Trade Regulations between Great Britain and Tibet were concluded under the Convention to replace the earlier regulations of 1893 and 1908.”

At the same time as the instructions were given for the volume of *Altchison’s Treaties* to be altered, the Surveyor-General of India was told to alter his map so as to show the McMahon alignment as the boundary in the north-east. Reacting with what may have been a degree of asperity, the Surveyor-General pointed out numerous inaccuracies and anomalies in the Red Line that had been sent to him to trace onto his maps. Despite this, from 1938 Survey of India maps began to show the McMahon Line, indicating in their legend that it was delimited but an undemarcated boundary. Copies of the new maps showing the

McMahon boundary were sent by the British Government to the leading firms of cartographic publishers in England, with the request that in their subsequent editions they should follow suit. Caroe himself had taken up this question with *The Times* before this, when he was on home leave, and apparently pointed out to the cartographers of Printing House Square that their maps were in error in their depiction of India's north-eastern frontier; his later recollection of this incident suggests that he got a predictably dusty answer, and *The Times* made no change in its map until 1940, when in *The Times Handy Atlas*, the McMahon Line appears for the first time.

Meanwhile, back on the frontier, the perennial and indeed inherent differences between the men on the spot—who tended to favour a forward policy—and the capital—which was apt to be more cautious—continued. Reid, the Assam Governor, wrote a personal letter to the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, in early 1939 urging that another, small expedition should be sent to follow up Lightfoot's :

“...there are three alternatives [Reid wrote]. The first is to wash our hands of the whole thing in spite of the fact that we told the local people that they were our subjects and not subjects of Tibet. This would save a lot of trouble and expense and, unless there are great changes in the situation in the north, would possibly have no inconvenient consequences for us. But one cannot contemplate with satisfaction a policy of abandoning to their fate those who have been told to regard themselves as dependent upon us.

“The second alternative is the permanent occupation of Tawang with consequential expenses. Other things being equal, this is a policy which obviously is the most desirable,

“The third alternative is that to which I have referred above, a further visit on a small scale this spring; but it is no use shutting our eyes to the fact that such a visit, if it is to be worthwhile, would have to be repeated periodically”.⁴⁶

In spite, presumably, of the influence of Caroe (who had by now become Foreign Secretary), the Government turned down the proposal for a second Tawang expedition. The shadow of war in Europe, combined with the usual reluctance to sanction additional

expenditure, outweighed the urgings of the forward school. The Government did, however, authorize a small punitive expedition against some troublesome tribes, and sanctioned Rs. 500 for the purpose of burning down some villages.

Sir Robert Reid went on home leave in February 1939, and a new voice made itself heard in the record of the continuing debate on north-eastern frontier policy. Henry Twynam, a man with much experience on the north-east frontier (he had long served in the Assam cadre of the Indian Civil Service) took over from Reid as acting Governor. Shortly after taking charge he wrote to Lord Linlithgow on 17 March a long and cogently argued letter questioning the necessity of occupying Tawang and disputing the juridical validity of the McMahon Line. (Substantial extracts from this letter, which is the quintessence of the "moderate" school of thought, appear as an appendix to this article.) Replying, on 17 April, Linlithgow said, *inter alia* : "...although I do not think that there is any reason to suppose that we are on insecure ground with regard to our Treaty rights, I fully agree with you that from the practical point of view there is no advantage and considerable risk in pressing the matter further with the Tibetan Government."⁴⁷

London agreed to the "position resulting from Government of India's prohibition of further expedition to Tawang...and proposed that the whole question of future policy to be adopted in Tawang area should be reconsidered in a year's time in the light of financial and other considerations then prevailing."⁴⁸ The Secretary of State for India (Lord Zetland) also agreed with New Delhi's view that Gould should make no further approach to the Tibetan Government in the matter.

In a letter to the Viceroy of 25 August 1939, Lord Zetland wrote : "I notice no mention is made of the suggestion put forward unofficially in Twynam's letter...that possibility should be considered of establishing the frontier ultimately in the neighbourhood of the Se La and the Digien River, instead of asserting our full rights under the McMahon Agreement to the whole of the Tawang area. ...I should be interested to have some expression of your views on Twynam's suggestion".⁴⁹

To this, the Viceroy replied :

“The reason why no reference was made to Twynam’s proposal ...to establish the frontier ultimately in the neighbourhood of the Se La and the Digien River was that he has not yet put it forward officially. My view is that there is much to be said for his proposal both on general and financial grounds, particularly as he thinks that a boundary on the Se La line would only cost about one-fourth of the expenditure estimated to be necessary if we were to decide eventually to go right up to the McMahon Line and include Tawang. The present position is that...we have asked Twynam to hold his hand for a year, after which the whole matter will be reviewed. Meanwhile, from subsequent reports received from Twynam, it seems possible that it is more urgent to push further east of the line of the Lower Siang River (the Brahmaputra) where Tibetan influence shows signs of extending into areas which are purely tribal on an easy line of approach to the border of Assam”.⁵⁰

In August the following year, a conference was held at Government House, Shillong, in which all the key officers concerned with the north-east frontier participated—including the Governor of Assam (Reid was back at his post), the Governor’s Secretary, the Political Officer, Sikkim, the Political Officer, Sadiya Frontier Tract, and the Political Officer, Balipara Frontier Tract. Caroe was not included. Caroe had, however, put his views on border policy in a paper, *The Mongolian Fringe*, which was widely circulated among the officials concerned. At this conference it was agreed that the Government of India should not press their claims to Tawang ; Twynam’s suggestion that an alignment more suitable for the boundary line than the McMahon Line could be found farther south, in the neighbourhood of Dirang Dzong, was accepted. (As will be seen, this concession was later formally offered to Tibet.)

THE WARTIME ATTEMPT TO EXTEND ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL

By the end of 1941, the entry of Japan into the War created a new and dangerous situation at the north-east frontier of India.

By 1943 wider concerns were beginning again to impinge on the narrow focus of New Delhi's Tibet policy. The fall of Burma had closed the land-route for supplies to China, and the Chinese were the pressing for the opening of a new supply road to follow the Lohit Valley or some other route from North-East India through Tibet and so into Szechwan. Later developments suggest (and earlier attitudes would go to confirm) that such proposals were ill-received by the Government of India. The needs of the grand alliance against the Axis Powers were one thing ; but the old imperial cause of the buffer status of Tibet, and the exclusion, as far as possible, of all Chinese influence, would have made the prospect of a road through Tibet into China most alarming. Such a road would have run through South-East Tibet, where Lhasa's grip was anyway tenuous, and this must have made the proposal even more unpalatable. The immense difficulty of the terrain powerfully reinforced New Delhi's reluctance. At the same time, the Tibetans used the lever of China's desperate need of a land supply route to attempt to pressure the Chinese Government into entering into a tripartite agreement (China, Tibet and India) about the proposed road. The Chinese refused outright, on the ground that Tibet was part of China ; and the British became apprehensive that the Chinese would invade Tibet to make their own road.⁵¹

At this time Britain made a last effort to endow the 30-year old Simla agreements with *ex post facto* legality. As St. Petersburg had been a factor in Britain's Tibet policy through the turn of the century, so now was Washington ; but of course the American alliance was of infinitely greater moment for an embattled Britain than her cautious concern for Tsarist sensibilities, or even Curzon's concern about Russian designs on Lhasa, had ever been.

On 15 March 1943, Anthony Eden, British Foreign Secretary, had a conversation in Washington with Dr. T. V. Soong, the Chinese Foreign Minister, in which the latter raised the question of Tibet. Soong said that Eden would "doubtless be aware of the fact that the Government of China had always regarded Tibet as part of the Republic." During his visit to India, Soong went

on, Chiang Kai-shek had not been wholly reassured about the attitude of the Government there on this score. He had noticed, for example, that the British had shown reluctance to agree to the proposal for opening a road through Tibet. Eden pointed to the physical difficulties, suggesting that these, and not political reservations, explained New Delhi's apparent reluctance, but closed the exchange with the observation that he was not sufficiently briefed on the subject to pursue it further. On being informed of this conversation, the Viceroy telegraphed New Delhi's view of the matters. He gave an extensive summary of Tibetan history *vis-a-vis* China, as it appeared to New Delhi, arguing to the conclusion that "Tibet is a separate country, in full enjoyment of local autonomy, entitled to exchange diplomatic representatives with other Powers. The relationship between China and Tibet is not a matter which can be unilaterally decided by China, but on which she can, if necessary, count on the diplomatic support of the British Government....."⁵²

In retrospect, this may be seen as the final British attempt to win international support for the long-standing policy of nurturing Tibetan separatism, with the aim at least of excluding Chinese power from Tibet, at the best of bringing Tibet within the British sphere. The State Department's response was prompt and categorical :

"The Government of the United States has borne in mind that the Chinese Government has long claimed suzerainty over Tibet, and that the Chinese constitution lists Tibet among the areas constituting the territory of the Government of China. This Government has at no time raised a question regarding either of these claims. The Government of the United States does not believe that a useful purpose would be served by opening at this time a detailed discussion of the status of Tibet."⁵³

In the light of this, it was apparent that there was no roundabout and retroactive way of legalizing the McMahon Line. The adamant American attitude also added a potent inhibition to any lingering thought in New Delhi of unilateral implementation of the McMahon Line, specially where that affected Tibetan possession of Tawang. A British move to occupy Tawang would

plainly touch Lhasa to the quick, with the result that the Tibetans might even turn to China with their complaint—and the Chinese would then certainly bring this to the attention of Washington. Reports that the British were up to their old game and, instead of getting on with the war, were grabbing territory at the expense of the unfortunate Tibetans, would no doubt provide excellent copy for the American newspapers doing no good either to the war effort or to Britain. It appears that, aware of this danger, London warned New Delhi to be careful to avoid even accidental clashes with the Tibetan forces.

Ultimately, however, after persistent prodding from Caroe—which touched on apprehensions in London that after the war China would attempt to reassert her position in Tibet—the British Government acquiesced in New Delhi's forward policy, so far as the north-east boundary was concerned. But, as has been seen, London's approval was not for implementation of McMahon's alignment as he had drawn it, but for the Twynam variant, sharply modified from McMahon's original so as to leave Tawang to Tibet.

J. P. Mills, a senior Indian Civil Service officer who was made responsible for the expansion of British administration involved in this policy, travelled through the tribal belt from its eastern end in Tsayul to the Tawang Tract in the far west. However, as he later made clear, in the four major approaches to Tibet—the Lohit and the Siang valleys and the Subansiri and Dirang Dzong areas—he encountered the constant obstacle of Tibetan political authority in the form of tax collectors, administrative officials and the like.⁵⁴ In addition, an Austrian-born anthropologist, Dr. Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, was taken into British service to help, as he put it, to “fill the political and administrative vacuum which had been allowed to persist between Assam and Tibet.”⁵⁵ He led several expeditions, exploratory and punitive, into the tribal belt in 1944-45.

In October 1944 Basil Gould attempted to persuade the Tibetans to acquiesce in what they regarded as British encroachments in the Tawang Tract and other areas they regarded as their own. The Chinese account of this episode, as given during

the talks between Chinese and Indian officials in 1960-61, was as follows :

“...In his conversation with the officials of the Tibet local government on 11 October 1944, Gould, British Political officer in Sikkim, admitted that with regard to Kalaktang in the Monyul area, the British Indian Government “had not” previously “exercised special administration over this area,” but to form a pretext for Britain’s occupation of the Monyul area, he invented the unfounded lie to the effect that “in view of the fact that recently the Chinese harboured intentions to occupy some places in Burma.” On 4 December of the same year, in his conversation with the local officials of the Tibet region, Gould further stated that “he was instructed to say that the officials sent by the Indian Government (*i. e.* the officers and men who occupied Kalaktang and Walong) were not in a position to withdraw. Therefore, it was hoped that the Tibet Government would give up minor considerations for broader interests, be far-sighted and instruct the Tsona Dzong etc. not to collect government taxes and corvee in the locality.”⁶⁶

Gould then went on to offer Tibet the concession which, as has been seen, the Government had decided on in 1940 :

“In the memorandum which Gould handed on the same day to local authorities of the Tibet region, it was stated that the British Indian Government insisted on the so-called McMahon Line which was illegally drawn and had never been recognized by the Chinese Government ; but it also indicated that “My Government was willing to change the boundary, namely that starting from Sela, it should run not to the north, but to the south of Tawang,” and demanded that “the officials of the Tibet Government be instructed not to exercise authority south of Sela.”⁶⁷

That this offer was definitive and formal is shown by the fact that Gould confirmed his oral presentation in an *aide-memoire*. According to the later Chinese account, however, the Tibetans rejected the British compromise proposal.

EPILOGUE

The development— or rather continuation—of the dispute about

the McMahon Line after 1947 is beyond the scope of this paper, but as an epilogue it can be noted that the Sino-Indian border conflict brought some of the former British administrators back into activity—or at least into print. The 1959 correspondence columns of *The Times* contain an interesting exchange between the former champions of the forward and moderate schools, rehearsing the positions they had earlier taken while officials. Twynam, for instance, wrote to *The Times* on 2 September 1959 saying that “...the McMahon Line which sought to secure the main crest of the Himalayas as the frontier does not exist and never has existed” and that “Tibetan settlement and with it Tibetan religion and culture extends south of the crests of the Himalayas.” Sir Olaf Caroe replied in *The Times* of 4 September that the McMahon Line had been the *de jure* frontier between India and Tibet since 1914, while much could be said for it as the *de facto* frontier as well. The Caroe school of thought complained that *The Times* was giving undue prominence to the views of its opponents and in February 1960, Sir Olaf, writing this time in *The Guardian*, sought to add strength to his case for the McMahon Line by quoting Aitchison’s official *Collection of Engagements, Treaties and Sanads*, Volume XIV, 1929 : in retrospect a strange exercise in circular reasoning since, as we have seen, he had himself been responsible in 1938 for altering the contents of the original volume.

Volume XIV of Aitchison’s *Treaties*, 1929, was later to be one of the key documents in the Indian Government’s claim for the validity of the McMahon Line but it is doubtful if Mr. Nehru ever realized how shaky that ground was or that the volume in question had been quietly faked in 1938 by the Foreign and Political Department of the British Indian Government.

APPENDIX

Henry Twynam to Lord Linlithgow, 17 March 1939,* Tawang

1. The questions which occur to me are as follows :

* IOR : Pol. (External) Dept. Collection 36/File 23 : Register No. 2029/39.
See above, p. 538.

(i) Is the occupation of Tawang necessary or desirable as a matter of high policy as suggested in Kingdon Ward's article in the journal of the Royal Central Asian Society for October 1938, i.e. in view of the possible developments as regards China and Japan? I understand from the late Lord Brabourne's letter to Hogg, dated 23 July 1938, that the risk of Chinese aggression in this quarter has materially decreased.

(ii) Are we on absolutely firm ground juridically as regards our rights under the Convention of 1914?

It appears from the Foreign Secretary's letter No. F. 433 X/35, dated 18 August 1936 to His Majesty's Under-Secretary of State for India that the Chinese Government did not ratify the 1914 Convention. If one of the three parties to a Tripartite Convention does not ratify, can another party to the Convention claim that it is binding between itself and the third party? I understand from Your Excellency's letter to Reid, dated 18 May 1938, that our Treaty rights in the Tawang area are undoubted vis-a-vis Tibet, and I realise that it is advisable to take our stand on the position arrived at in 1914. The following points are, perhaps, however, relevant as regards affording the Tibetans a loophole, or as presenting difficulties if the matter were referred to arbitration, and I mention them in case the advisability of further negotiation on the subject suggests itself to the External Affairs Department.

(iii) The map attached to the Convention is on such a small scale that the "red line" is superimposed on the word "Tawang." The actual boundary as now claimed is based upon notes exchanged on 24 and 25 March 1914 between Sir Henry McMahon and Lonchen Shatra, the Tibetan Plenipotentiary, which are accompanied by two maps which undoubtedly place Tawang on the British side of the "red line." The Tibetan Plenipotentiary's note dated 25 March 1914 states that he had received orders from Lhasa and accordingly agreed to the boundary. Do we base our claims on these notes, which are lacking in formalities associated with a treaty, or on Article 9 of the Convention which does not refer to the maps accompanying the interchanged notes, but only to the small scale map attached to the Convention which was subsequently not ratified by China?

(iv) Does the fact that we took no steps to implement Article 9 of Convention from 1914 to 1938 affect our position (a) from the point of view of International Law, (b) in equity in view of the lapse of time, and altered circumstances ?

(v) It is a part of our policy to remain on good terms with Tibet. That being so, is it desirable to press for the inclusion of the Tawang salient in British India when perhaps our object could be achieved by fixing the boundary further south possibly at the Digien River ? The Dirang Dzong area is sparsely inhabited and its inhabitants are much oppressed by the Akas, while in Kalakthang area, further south, there is a marked change in the characteristics of the inhabitants from Ronnongta, who are true Monbas or low country Bhutias, presumably of Tibetan stock, to Sherchopken who resemble more closely their savage neighbours to the East. Another alternative would be to aim at controlling only the Kalakthang area where the Tsona Jongpens do not collect tribute. It is these two areas which are subject to exactions by the savage Akas. This would involve the limitation of our proposals for ultimate occupation or "control" to one or two out of three "distinctive" areas described in Lightfoot's Report, i.e. the Kalakthang area and the sparsely inhabited Dirang Dzong area, but not the Tawang area itself. The limitation of our claims might be used as a diplomatic counter with the Tibetans for formal recognition of boundary just short of the Tawang, and possibly Dirang Dzong, areas and such administrative reforms in those areas as we might consider desirable.

2. Sir Henry McMahon's note, dated 8 July 1914, shows that the object of including Tawang was to secure (a) a natural watershed frontier, (b) access to the shortest trade route into Tibet and control of the monastery of Tawang which had blocked the trade by this route in the past by undue exaction and oppression.

Further exploration of the country seems to show that objective (a) could be secured by a frontier south of Tawang where the Sela and the Digien River constitute natural boundaries, and objective (b) by negotiation.

The last paragraph of Sir Henry McMahon's memorandum dated 28 March states : "They (The Tibetan Government) have

shown a great desire throughout the course of discussions regarding our mutual frontier to show a reasonable and just attitude. Should it be found desirable in the light of the more detailed knowledge which the Tibetan Government and ourselves may acquire in the future to modify the course of the boundary line at any place, we shall doubtless endeavour to show a similar attitude in regard to Tibetan interests, although no obligation to do so has been mentioned in the agreement."

That was written 25 years ago and has some bearing on the point raised by me in (ii) (b) above in view of the dilatoriness which we have shown in taking steps to investigate the position.

It seems from the old correspondence that the Tibetan Government were imperfectly acquainted with the position of Tawang and decided the cession without consulting the local landed proprietors or local authorities in the area. This is hardly surprising, when it is considered that the Government was then even more theocratic and medieval than it is now. Last year's exploratory expedition has shown that Tsona Jongpens of Tibet exercise control over Tawang, and to a lesser extent the Dirang Dzong areas. It was known in 1914 that the "Mon people" paid taxes to Tsona Dzong, but in view of the large measure of local autonomy allowed to Provincial monasteries in Tibet, the implications of this fact were perhaps hardly appreciated by the authorities at Lhasa.

Humanitarian grounds alone would scarcely be sufficient to justify a "forward" policy as similar grounds could be urged for the occupation of other areas of Tibet...It is true that last year's expedition may have excited hopes and raised claims, but it is possible that much could be done to fulfil expectations without going so far as to occupy an area which has always been oriented towards Tibet ethnographically, politically and in religion and is even now in Lightfoot's words "dominated by representatives of the Tibetan Government."

Possible alternatives are (a) the establishment of a Control area to include Dirang Dzong and Kalakthang areas, or possibly the latter area only, (b) posting a native Trade Agent at Tawang to represent our interests there, (c) establishment of a frontier post to

safeguard the inhabitants of the Control area from the Akas and Daflas...

The crux of the whole question apart from the financial aspect appears to lie in Lhasa's reactions to a forward policy and the extent to which these should be allowed for...*

1. The background to the Simla Conference and the course of the Conference have been exhaustively recounted and analysed, notably by Professor Alastair Lamb in his two-volume study *The McMahon Line* (London : Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966). Miss Dorothy Woodman in her *Himalayan Frontiers* (London : Barrie & Rockliff, 1969) adds some fresh material.
2. Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers*, p. 176.
3. The distinction between "delimitation" and "demarcation" is all-important in the discussion of boundary questions. It was first drawn in 1897 by Sir Henry McMahon, who later put it in these words : "The laying down of boundaries comprises two distinct and important stages, 'Delimitation,' and 'Demarcation'...'Delimitation' I have taken to comprise the determination of a boundary line by treaty or otherwise, and its definition in written verbal terms; 'Demarcation' to comprise the actual laying down of a boundary line on the ground, and its definition by boundary pillars or other similar physical means." (Sir Henry McMahon's inaugural Address as the President-Elect to the Royal Society of Arts, 6 November, 1935. *JRCS*, Vol. LXXXIV.)
4. India Office Records (IOR) : L/P & S/10/181. Confidential Note by Chief of General Staff, 1 June 1912. I would like to record my gratitude to Mr. Martin Moir of the India Office Library for the unstinting help he gave me in searching these records.
5. I. O. R. : Pol. 464 : Pts. 5 & 6 : L/P & S / 10 / 344. Political and Secret Memo B 206. No. 90 of 1914 G. O. I. Foreign and Political Department. Hardinge to Crew, 23 July 1914.
6. I. O. R. : Pol. 464 : Pts. 5 & 6 : L/ P & S/ 10/ 344. No. 448 .E. B. Simla, 3 September 1915. From Foreign Secretary to the Government of India to C. A. Bell, Political Officer in Sikkim,
7. *Ibid.*
8. C. U. Aitchison, *Collection of Engagements, Treaties and Sanads published under the authority of the Foreign and Political Department, Govt. of India*, Vol. XIV.
9. I. O. R. : L/P & S/10/1192. No. P 2972/1928, Simla, 22 May 1928. From Foreign Secretary, Government of India, to Secretary, Political Department, India Office, London.

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10. For reasons explained below, only two copies of this volume are known to this author to be in existence. They are in the India Office Records and Harvard University Library, (See note 45).
11. Aitchison, Vol. XIV, p. 20.
12. *Tibet Past and Present* (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1924), pp. 155-156.
13. Aitchison, Vol. XII, p. 100.
14. I.O.R. : Pol. (External) Dept. : Collection 36/File 23, No. P.Z. 2788/1936. Caroe to Walton, 9 April, 1936.
15. "The McMahon Line was drawn just before World War 1 and then forgotten," Caroe (by then Sir Olaf) recalled in 1959, "and I know all about this because...it was I who discovered that it had been forgotten". (*Asian Review*, London, January 1960). H. E. Richardson, the last British—and first Indian—representative in Tibet, gave Caroe his due : "In 1936 he discovered that the exact position and nature of India's frontier with Tibet was unknown...And it was due to Sir Olaf that the frontier was revived and was made very much a reality ; and what he started has been kept up". (*Ibid.* October, 1959).
16. See above, note 14.
17. This says : "For the purpose of the present Convention the borders of Tibet, and the boundary between Outer and Inner Tibet, shall be shown in red and blue respectively on the map attached hereto."
18. I.O.R. : Pol. (External) Dept. : Collection 36/File 29. Telegram No. 3028, 5 November, 1935. From Foreign, New Delhi to Political Officer, Sikkim, Lhasa.
19. I. O. R. : Pol. (External) Dept. : Collection 36/File 29. Telegraph R No. 5, 14 November, 1935. From Trade Agent, Lhasa to Foreign, New Delhi.
20. I. O. R. : Pol. (External) Dept. : Collection 37/File 28. No. P. Z. 9019/1935.
21. See above, note 14.
22. I. O. R. : Pol. (External) Dept. : Collection 36/File 23. No. P. Z. 2661/1936.
23. I. O. R. : Pol. (External) Dept. : Collection 36/File 23. Assam Secretariat, D. O, Pol. 1887/9/85 A. P. This appears to be the first occasion on which the crest-line alignment was given the name of its progenitor.
24. I. O. R. : Pol. (External) Dept. : Collection 36/File 23: The Residency, Gangtok, Sikkim. D.O. No. 6(3)—P/35.
25. I. O. R. : Pol. (External) Dept. : Collection 36/File 23. Foreign and Political Department, New Delhi.
26. In this address McMahon said, "The lessons of history teach us the grave political dangers of an ill-defined and undemarcated frontier...I fear that future history may have to record yet further wars arising

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- from dispute over undemarcated boundaries." This fear was unhappily fulfilled in 1962.
27. See above, note 14.
 28. I. O. R. : Pol. (External) Dept. : Collection 36/File 23. No. P. Z., 2905/1936.
 29. I.O.R. : Pol. (External) Dept. : Collection 36/File 23. No. P. Z. 4911/36.
 30. I. O. R. : Pol. (External) Dept. : Collection 36/File 23. No. 6154/1936.
 31. I. O. R. : Pol. (External) Dept. : Collection 36/File 23. No. 6153/1936.
 32. Walton to Secretary, Foreign and Political Dept., 15 October 1936. The British Embassy in Peking later commented that although the Shen Pao Atlas was not an official publication, Chinese legislation required that "no maps and charts showing the boundaries of China may be published without the imprimatur of the Central Government authorities." Peking letter of 15 December 1936, I. O. R. : Pol. (External) Dept. : Collection 36/File 23. No. P.Z. 802/1937.
 33. See above, note 32.
 34. I. O. R. : Pol. (External) Dept. : Collection 36/File 29. No. P.Z. 3850/1936,
 35. I.O.R. : Pol. (External) Dept. : Collection 36/File 29. Telegram XX No. 2929, 8 December 1936, New Delhi.
 36. I. O. R. : Pol. (External) Dept. : Collection 36/File 29. Telegram XX No. 205, 12 December 1936, Lhasa.
 37. I.O.R. : Pol. (External) Dept. : Collection 36/File 23. S 4/3.
 38. I. O. R. : Pol. (External) Dept. : Collection 36(2)/File 23.
 39. Sir Robert Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam* (Shillong : The Assam Government Press, 1942), pp. 295-296.
 40. I.O.R. : Pol. (External) Dept. : Register No. P. Z. 3507/38. Telegram R. No. 899, 4 May 1938. From Gould, Yatung to Foreign, Simla. (See also Sir Robert Reid, *History of Frontier Areas*, p. 297.)
 41. I. O. R. : Pol. (External) Dept. : Collection 36/File 29. Register No. P. Z. 5109/1938.
 42. "The British Government undertakes to exercise no interference in the internal administration of Bhutan. On its part the Bhutanese Government agrees to be guided by the advice of the British Government in regard to its external relations". (Aitchison, Vol XIV, p. 100).
 43. I. O. R. : Pol. (External) Dept. : Collection 36/File 29. Confidential letter No. 3(5)-L/37, Lhasa, 26 August 1938. From Rai Bahadur Norbu Dhondup to the Political Officer, Sikkim.
 44. I.O.R. : Pol. (External) Dept. : Collection 36/File 23: G. E. Crombie's Note to Mr. R. Peel, 20 October 1938.
 45. The Harvard volume was discovered by Mr. John Addis, see Alastair Lamb : *The McMahon Line*, Vol. II, p. 546n. It is, however, possible that more original copies are to be found in University and private

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libraries, whence, of course, they could not be recalled for destruction.

46. I. O. R. : Pol. (External) Dept. : Collection 36/File 29. Reid's confidential letter to Linlithgow, dated 3 January, 1939.
 47. I. O. R. : Pol. (External) Dept. : Collection 36/File 29. Lord Linlithgow's private and personal letter to Twynam.
 48. I. O. R. : Pol. (External) Dept. : Collection 36/File 29. Register No. P.Z: 2976/39,
 49. I. O. R. : Pol. (External) Dept. : Collection 36/File 29. Paragraph for Secretary of State's letter to Viceroy *included* 25 July, 1939.
 50. I. O. R. : Pol. (External) Dept. : Collection 36/File 29. Extract from private letter from Lord Linlithgow to Lord Zetland, 24 August 1939.
 51. See H. E. Richardson, *Tibet and its History* (London : O. U. P., 1962), pp. 160-164 ; Tieh-Tseng Li, *Tibet To-day and Yesterday* (New York : Bookman Associates, 1960), p. 189.
 52. *Foreign Relations of the United States : 1943 : China* (Department of State, Washington), pp. 626-628. This telegram bears all the hallmarks of having been drafted by Caroe. Owing to the operation of the "30-year rule" the British copy of this telegram is not yet de-classified.
 53. *Ibid*, p. , 630. The Department of State to the British Embassy : *Aide-memoire*.
 54. J. P. Mills, "Problem of the Assam-Tibet Frontier," *Journal of Royal Central Asian Society* (April 1950).
 55. C. von Furer-Haimendorf, *Himalayan Barbary* (London : John Murray, 1955), Introduction, P. xi.
 56. See *CR*, 104—106.
 57. *CR*, 106.
- * The writer was given much assistance in the writing up of his research by Neville Maxwell (author of *India's China War*) and wishes to make clear this obligation and his appreciation.

6

A BRITISH LEGACY TO FREE INDIA

Nehru told the Indian Parliament on August 13, 1959 : "As far as we are concerned the McMahon Line is the firm frontier, firm by treaty, firm by usage, firm by geography". But a study of documents now available in the India Office Records does not substantiate his claim. As a geographical boundary, the McMahon Line, roughly following the crest line of the Himalayas, may be regarded as a natural divide between India and China. But right up to 1947 it was not considered a "firm" frontier either by "treaty" or by "usage".

In a secret exchange of notes between the Tibetans and Sir Henry McMahon, the British representative at the Simla Conference of 1913-14, a new boundary about 60 miles northward from the plains of Assam was agreed on. The Chinese representative at the conference was not informed about the negotiations, and if he learnt about them it was only through his own intelligence sources. Whether McMahon's secret agreement was a valid legal basis for his line as an international boundary was one of the main issues debated between the Indian and Chinese Governments in the early 1960's. But the archives show that in 1914 even the British Indian Government did not regard the McMahon Line as a valid boundary—and the Government in London certainly did not.

Records show that London, as much as the Chinese, was kept in the dark about McMahon's attempts to negotiate a new boundary with Tibet. The first recorded reference to them came in the Viceroy's report to London on the abortive Simla Conference in which he said "... We recognize that a consideration of the eastern or India-Chinese portion of the north-eastern frontier did not form part of the functions of the conference". He forwarded to London McMahon's report on his exchanges with the Tibetans (which McMahon certainly regarded as having achieved the new

“strategic” frontier he had aimed at), but asked that McMahon’s “view and proposals be regarded as personal and not at present carrying the endorsement of the Government of India”.

The Viceroy’s tentativeness may have been due to his awareness of the fact that McMahon’s dealings with the Tibetans leading to territorial cessions by them were in breach of treaties London had concluded with Russia and China. At all events, documents show that McMahon’s boundary was still-born; they also show how it was resuscitated. The official record of all treaties entered into by the Government of India was kept in a series of volumes known as *Aitchison’s Treaties, Engagements and Sanads*. The first of these to cover the period of the Simla Conference, Volume XIV, was published in 1929, and said: “In 1913 a conference of Tibetan, Chinese and British Plenipotentiaries met in India to try and bring about a settlement in regard to matters on the Sino-Tibetan frontier; and a tripartite Convention was drawn up and initialled in 1914. The Chinese Government, however, refused to permit their plenipotentiary to proceed to full signature”.

Thus there was no attempt to disguise that the conference had been abortive; and there was no mention of the McMahon Line. But in 1938 this volume was withdrawn from circulation (as far as possible) and ordered to be destroyed. It was surreptitiously replaced by a new volume, still bearing the date 1929. This volume gave a different account of the Simla Conference and its results.

It suggested that a valid convention, ratified by Britain and Tibet, had emerged from the Simla Conference and that this had included a definition of a part of the Indo-Tibetan frontier, the McMahon Line. This falsification of the official record has been an important source of public confusion in India about the true legacy of Britain to independent India as far as the north-eastern boundary is concerned.

Documents show that this amendment of the official record by a device not far short of diplomatic forgery owed much to the initiative and efforts of one man, Olaf Caroe, the Deputy Secretary to the Foreign and Political Department of the Government of India. In 1935 he “unearthed” the dead letter of the McMahon

Line, as he put it. He apparently believed that it was in India's interest to have this line as the north-eastern boundary and so devoted his efforts to that end. Records show that he succeeded in convincing the Government in New Delhi, and then in London, that the McMahon Line should be regarded as the boundary. Accordingly, official maps which until then had never shown the McMahon Line, began to do so in 1939.

The British Government did not, however, agree to Caroe's suggestion that a protest be sent to China about Chinese maps which ignored the McMahon Line. London must have felt that no protest should be made since it was likely to lead to an undesirable discussion with the Chinese Government about the validity of the 1914 agreements McMahon had made with the Tibetan delegation to the Simla Conference (which of course China had all along dismissed as illegal and invalid). And weight was also attached to the possibility that such a protest would lead to increased Chinese interest in the tribal territories between the McMahon Line and the boundary which the Chinese claimed beneath the foothills.

Study of files in the India Office should convince anybody that the charge of cartographic aggression which has often been hurled in the Press and Parliament in India against China has been made without having full knowledge of the history of cartographic practices of the two sides since the 1930s. Documents also reveal that Caroe's persistent efforts after 1936 to induce Tibetans to agree to the McMahon Line were fruitless (Lhasa had never ratified the agreement made at Simla between Tibetan plenipotentiaries and McMahon). British emissaries to Lhasa, Sir Basil Gould (1936 and 1944), Rai Bahadur Norbu (1938) and Hopkinson (1945), had all argued in vain with the Tibetan authorities to accept the McMahon boundary.

It also appears that Caroe was not unopposed in his frontier policy. There were two schools among top officials in British India as regards the Indo-Tibetan boundary. While Caroe was leader of the "forward" school, Sir Henry Twynam, an I.C.S. official who became acting Governor of Assam in February 1939, emerged as the main protagonist of the "moderate" school. In a

letter to the Viceroy in March 1939, he suggested that the claim to a boundary on the full McMahon alignment should at least be modified to leave the important monastery of Tawang to Tibet. He suggested that the British were not on "absolutely firm ground juridically" in their interpretation of the Simla Conference and its results.

He pointed out that the letters exchanged in 1914 between McMahon and the Tibetans were "lacking in the formalities associated with a treaty" and argued that the fact that the Government had taken no steps to implement the McMahon Line from 1914 to 1938 must adversely affect its position, both in equity and in international law. He concluded that, since it was part of British policy to maintain friendly relations with Tibet, alternatives should be considered before the Government occupied in Tawang "an area which has always been oriented towards Tibet ethnographically, politically and in religion." At a high level meeting in Shillong just over a year later (August 1940) Twynam's proposal for modification of the McMahon alignment was accepted, and it was decided that the boundary claim should exclude Tawang.

In 1943 the Government of India made a last effort to endow the Simla Convention with legality retrospectively by trying to obtain American recognition of Tibet's de facto independence beneath "formal Chinese suzerainty." It urged the U.S.A. to recognize Tibet's right "to exchange diplomatic representatives with other Powers." But the Americans curtly rejected the proposal on the ground that Tibet was Part of China.

MYTHS ABOUT A FRONTIER DISPUTE

The Dominion of India was internationally recognized in 1947 as the successor State to the British Raj and, as such, inherited its rights and obligations in regard to other States. Consequently, India's claim on the northern frontier were limited by what it inherited from the Raj.

A careful examination of the British maps relating to the Kashmir frontier, i.e. the western sector of the northern frontier during the last days of the Raj, shows that up to 1938 most of the Survey of India maps did not show any line, or colour difference, between northern and eastern Kashmir and the adjoining territories of Sinkiang and Tibet which were parts of the Chinese Republic. In 1945, under the guidance of Sir Olaf Caroe, the then Foreign Secretary of India, a new Survey of India map was issued wherein the western sector of the northern frontier was shown by a colour-wash, but with the words "Boundary Undefined" printed on it. In the authoritative publication of the Foreign and Political Department of the British Government of India—generally known as *Aitchison's Treaties*—relating to Kashmir, it was written explicitly, "The northern as well as the eastern boundary of the Kashmir State is still undefined."

The first Director of the Historical Division, Indian Ministry of External Affairs, the late Professor K. Zachariah, informed the North and North-East Border Committee (1951-53) that there was no well-defined boundary along the northern and eastern periphery of the State of Kashmir. He pointed out that there were three versions of the northern and eastern boundary of Kashmir put forward by British officials, cartographers and explorers at various periods since 1846, when the State of Jammu and Kashmir came under British Paramountcy.

First, there was the Sir John Ardagh Line (1897) showing a

boundary alignment which took the crest of the Kuenlun range and placed within British territory the upper reaches of the Yarkand river and its tributaries and the Karakash river, as well as the whole of the Aksai Chin plateau. (This was a strategic adaptation of the Johnson boundary of 1865 conforming to the territorial ambitions of the Dogra rulers of Kashmir.)

Secondly, there was the Macartney-Macdonald line (1899), which put forth a less ambitious territorial claim north of the Karakoram range. East of the Karakoram Pass, it left to China the whole of the Karakash valley and almost all of Aksai Chin proper. It followed the Lak Tsang range which left, on the Indian side, the Lingzi Tang salt plains and the whole of the Chang Chenmo valley, as well as the Chip Chap river further north.

Finally, there was the Karakoram Line, which was based on the watershed principle. The map of India attached to the *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission*, Volume I (1930), shows the Karakoram range depicting the northern and north-eastern boundary of Kashmir.

On the other hand, the Chinese maps since the 1920's have consistently shown the Sino-Indian border in the western sector along the Karakoram line. This was never challenged by the British Government of India.

Sir H. A. F. Rumbold, who held responsible posts in the India Office, London, till the end of British rule, wrote in 1977 : "In the north-west, in the frozen, uninhabitable, wilderness of the Aksai Chin where 200 miles separated the areas in which Indian or Tibetan authority ran, there was no need for a defined frontier in the days of the Raj, and there was none. In 1929 the Simon Commission wished to include a map of India in Volume I of their report, and the question arose how India's northern frontiers should be shown. In researching this point for them, I found nothing in the India Office records to justify the line on the Kuenlun range indicated on some maps and the "Commission... accordingly adopted a line roughly along the crest of the Karakoram range, excluding the Aksai Chin. But the post-independence Government of India fought a war over this worthless area..."

Nehru was apparently aware of the difficulties about the northern and eastern frontier of Kashmir, apart from the complications arising from the fact that the question of the future status of the State of Jammu and Kashmir was on the agenda of the Security Council since January 1948. Nehru had been making statements to the Press and in Parliament about India's north-eastern border being along the McMahon Line since January 1950, but he discreetly remained vague about the boundary claims in the Kashmir sector.

The Survey of India maps between 1945 and 1952 showed the northern and eastern boundaries of Kashmir as "Undefined", but an attempt was made by means of a colour-wash to convey a vague idea of the northern and eastern boundaries of Kashmir, more or less in conformity with the Johnson-Ardagh Line in the region east of the Karakoram Pass. In July 1954, however, after the signing of the Panch Sheel agreement between India and China and the first visit of Chou En-lai to Delhi earlier in June 1954, a new map of India was quietly issued, wherein the words "Boundary Undefined" were erased. By this simple process, the Survey of India maps were unilaterally changed to lay a claim to a boundary alignment of Kashmir east of the Karakoram Pass in conformity with the Johnson-Ardagh Line, including the whole of the Aksai Chin and reaching the Kuenlun Mountain in the north-east.

Nehru might be held responsible for unilaterally changing the map of the northern and eastern frontiers of Kashmir, making extravagant territorial claims north of the Karakoram mountains without any negotiations with China, and thus creating an embryonic border dispute in the western sector of the northern frontier. But till September 1959, he also made several statements indicating that India's claims on the Aksai Chin and Ladakh area were not as sacrosanct as the McMahon Line. He also issued a secret directive to his officials on September 13, 1959, which said, "The Aksai Chin area has to be left more or less as it is, as we have no check-posts there and practically little of access. Any questions in relation to it can only be considered, when the time arises, in the context of the larger question of the entire border. For the present we have to put up with the Chinese occupation of

this north eastern sector (of Ladakh) and their road across it....Our general instructions to our people on the border should be that they should avoid any provocative action..." (Quoted by Neville Maxwell in *India's China War*).

In spite of this directive, some Home Ministry officials and the Indian Intelligence Bureau sent a forward patrol in the Kongka Pass region which lies near the junction between Tibet, Sinkiang and Ladakh. This led to a serious border clash on October 21, 1959 in which the leader of a Chinese patrol lost his life, while nine Indian border policemen were killed. This incident was discussed on October 23 at a meeting called by Nehru and attended by the Defence Minister and the Chief of the Army Staff. According to the then Intelligence Bureau chief, "The Intelligence Bureau was made the common target by the Army Headquarters and the External Affairs Ministry and accused of expansionism and causing provocations on the frontier...The Army demanded that no further movements of armed police should take place on the frontier without their clearance..." But the facts revealed at this meeting were kept a closely guarded secret till 1972. The Government of India publicly accused China of "unprovoked aggression" over this incident and public opinion in India was roused to boiling point, and this in its turn hamstrung any compromise settlement of the border question in April 1960 when Chou En-lai offered to accept India's claims to the north-east frontier if China's claims in the Aksai Chin area were recognized by India.

The Historical Division of the External Affairs Ministry played a sinister role in the Sino-Indian border dispute, particularly in regard to the western sector by feeding the Government and the public with myths, in the garb of history, about India's claims up to the Kuenlun mountains in the Kashmir region.

APPENDIX

A NOTE ON SOURCE MATERIAL ON THE SINO-INDIAN BORDER DISPUTE : WESTRN SECTOR

Searching for sources on the Sino-Indian border dispute, we have found the following references to the North-eastern frontier of Kashmir during the days of the British Raj in the India Office Records and Library, London :

(i) I.O.R. No. P/173 (Draft Paper) Letter from A. Hirtzel to Mr. V. Wellesley (Foreign Office) dated 10 January, 1924: "So far as we know there is no officially recognized boundary, though obviously the main Mustagh-Karakoram divide would constitute a natural frontier line".

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(ii) "In 1897, the Director of Military Intelligence, Sir John Ardagh, in a memorandum drawing attention to the desirability of settling with China our Frontier between the Pamir and Tibet recommended two alternative lines either of which would give us a 'glacis' in front of the main watershed of the Hindukush, Mustagh and Karakoram ranges. The Government of India, however, 'saw no strategic advantage in going beyond mountains over which no hostile advance is likely ever to be attempted'.

"Renewed apprehension of Russian occupation of Sinkiang [Xinjiang] and desire to separate Russian influence as far as possible from India led the Government of India in 1912 to state the view that the first essential was to demand as a preliminary to negotiations (if these should be contemplated) recognition of a boundary line which place Tagdumbash, Raksam, Sahidulla and Aksai Chin outside Russian and within our territory...No further action was taken, but the departmental view was unfavourable to this advanced line, which could not be held effectively.

“The possibility of negotiations arose again in 1915 and in this connection the Government of India affirmed their adherence to the frontier with Sinkiang which they had proposed in 1912. The negotiations, however, did not take place and the matter was again dropped.”

(iii) Referring to the proposed exploration of the Oprang Valley lying between the Karakoram range and Yarkand river by two British officials (Lieutenant Wood and Captain Glennie) in March 1923, a telegram from Viceroy, foreign and political department dated 8 February 1923 (I.O.R. P530/1923) to the Secretary to State for India said *inter alia* : “According to boundary between Ladakh and Kashgar, as recognised by the British Government, this area lies on the Chinese side of the Line.”

(iv) In 1928, the Statutory Commission set up by the British Parliament for administrative reforms in India called for an authoritative map from the India Office indicating their idea of the limits of the British Raj in India. That map was published in the *Simon Commission Report* (vol. 1). It shows the Karakoram range as depicting the northern and north-eastern boundary of Kashmir. (This official map is interesting in another sense also. It was the first official map since the abortive Simla Conference (1913-14), which depicted the North-eastern frontier of India along the ridge of the Himalayas, which was later called the ‘McMahon Line’ by Olaf Caroe in 1935.)

(v) In 1931, the authoritative publication of the Foreign and Political Department of the British Government of India—generally known as *Aitchison's Treaties*—contained the following statement in the narrative relating to Kashmir : “The northern as well as the eastern boundary of the Kashmir State is still undefined”. (vol. xii, pt. i, p. 5).

(vi) Colonel Schomberg who was sponsored by the Government of India in several exploratory missions in the trans-frontier regions of Kashmir, shows the Karakoram mountain as the boundary between Kashmir and Xinjiang in his book *The Unknown Karakoram* (1936).

(vii) The Mir of Hunza, a feudatory state in the north-west region of Kashmir, had some grazing rights beyond the Karakoram

mountains in the Sarikal area. But the Mir was given no protection by the British when the Xinjiang authorities seized two of his men together with 300 of his sheep in 1936. This story was related to Mr. K.P.S. Menon as noted by the latter in his book *Delhi-Chunking* (1974, p. 31).

(viii) In 1937, General Mahmud, who commanded the Turki troops at Kashgar in Xinjiang since 1934, broke away from the Chinese administration at Urumchi and was presumed to be making for Leh accompanied by a considerable force. According to India Office Records, during the British days there were only two routes between Xinjiang and Kashmir. One of the routes passed through Gilgit and Hunza and involved a more hazardous journey. The other route traversed from the Karakoram Pass to Leh through the Aksai Chin region. The India Office was in a dilemma as to how to deal with such a contingency as they wanted to remain on good terms with the Chinese Republic. In the India Office Minute paper (p.z. 2337/37) it was written *inter alia* : "...they (i.e. Turkish soldiery under General Mahmud) probably could not be stopped on the actual frontier, which is undetermined". (I.O.R. L/P/S/12/2387).

(ix) In the *Report of the Officials of the Government of India and the People's Republic of China on the Boundary Question*, there is a reference to the arrest of 11 Ladakhis in the Aksai Chin region by the Chinese and a protest note to the British from the Xinjiang authorities in September 1941 (CR-203). On the other hand, the Indian report on page 260 asserts that the Chinese claim about the Kirghiz and Uighur people of Xinjiang visiting the Aksai Chin and Lingzithang areas for salt-mining, pasturing and trading, has not been backed by any Chinese document. We found in the India Office Records, the following protest note from Mr. Chen Fang-po [Zhen Fangbo], Kashgar District Administrative Commissioner and Concurrently In-charge of Foreign Affairs, Kashgar, dated 9 September 1941 addressed to Mr. E. E. Shipton, His Majesty's Consul-General, Kashgar :

"Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that 11 Indians who had crossed the frontier at Akzaihinghai in Khotan district were

detained by the authorities there. Questioned they gave their names as follows : 1. Kuochon, 2 Dorki, 3. Nurb, 4. Kwank, 5. Dankinzunzuk, 6. Tokmy and 7. Pataza. In the name of tending sheep, these men crossed the border and attempted to steal salt for transportation to India. The other four men whose names are : 1. Tulimintze, 2. Namkli, 3. Kunzukzumzu, 4. Danzilinamkli, were sent by special service organisation to encroach on the frontier. They tendered 620 sheep and 4 horses, carrying with them two native sporting guns.

Whilst they were crossing a river on their way to a serai under the escort of the frontier officers, one of the Indians named Danzilinamkli was drowned. According to the deceased, three soldiers and one civilian who were travelling behind also attempted to cross the borders.

The intention of these men is quite imaginable in view of the fact that over ten Indians have surreptitiously crossed the frontier, some of them attempting to steal salt while others trespassing the border under the orders of the Special Service organisation, and that even soldiers likewise attempted encroaching on the frontier.

In order to maintain the relations between China and Britain, the Sinkiang Provincial Government have sent back the above criminals together with their sheep, horses and guns by the original route, and instructed me to lodge a strong protest with you. I hope that you will report the matter to the Indian Government drawing their attention to such matters and requesting them to put a stop to the occurrence of similar incident in the future. In case of any further occurrence of encroachment on frontier, both animals and articles would be confiscated for the sake of strengthening the frontier defence.

I avail, etc.

(sealed and signed) Chen Fang-po [Zhen Fangbo]"

(L/P/S/12/2383, EXT/7338(1941, Coll. 12/12/File 43 (Translation)

(x) It may be of interest to know that this incident took place in the Amotgor Lake area very near the region through which the Chinese built the Aksai Chin highway in 1956-57. This document about the arrest of 11 Ladakhis seems to reveal the hollowness of the assertion made by the Indian Officials : "...not a single

document either from the archives of the Sinkiang administration or from contemporary records was produced to establish the prevalence of this practice". (*Officials Report*, p. 260). The ubiquitous presence of the Chinese in the Aksai Chin area since the advance of the Chinese Army into Tibet in 1951 was accepted by Nehru himself speaking in the Lok Sabha on 14 August 1962 : "It was about that time that the Chinese took possession of Tibet, and soon after, as their possession grew, their hold grew, it was difficult for them from the logistic point of view, to feed them, to send supplies, etc. right across the Gobi desert...They have gradually made roads, etc. and in the course of that road-making, in the middle of 1950's, they improved the whole caravan route which passed through the northern area of Aksai Chin into Tibet from Sinkiang."

(xi) According to the report submitted by the Chinese at the Conference of the Officials in 1960-61 : "In 1940-41, the Chinese side conducted, with the assistance of Soviet experts, a survey in that part of Sinkiang which bordered on Ladakh, and drew up topographical maps of 2,00,000 to 1 in scale." Considering the close collaboration between General Sheng Shizai and the Soviet Union during 1933-42 and the Soviet interest in the mineral wealth of Xinjiang an extensive survey of the Aksai region by the Soviet experts during 1940-41 is a distinct possibility. In the *Soviet Encyclopedia* of 1949 (vol.20, p. 492), as well as in later editions, the Karakoram mountains are shown as the northern boundary of Jammu and Kashmir, and this gives further credence to the Soviet survey of Aksai Chin (which lies north-east of the Karakoram) having been accomplished without the knowledge of the British authorities in India.

(xii) If we examine the Survey of India maps relating to the northern frontier of India and Tibet, including the map attached to the abortive Simla Convention (1913-14), we get the following pictures in successive maps : (a) In the *Simla Convention Map*, Lingzithang plains, and by geographic implication the Aksai Chin plateau, is included in Outer Tibet ; (b) *Map of India and Adjacent Countries* (1917) shows no boundary in the western and middle sector ; (c) *Map of Southern Asia* (1929) shows no boundary

in the western sector ; (d) *Map of Highlands of Tibet and Surrounding Regions* (1936) shows no boundary in the western and middle sectors ; (e) *Map of Tibet and Adjacent Countries* (1938) shows no boundary in the western and middle sectors. These maps did not show any line or colour difference between northern and eastern Kashmir and the adjoining territories of Xinjiang and Tibet which were parts of the Chinese Republic. But in 1945, under the guidance of Sir Olaf Caroe, the then Foreign Secretary of India, a new *Map of India* was issued by Survey of India wherein the Indian claim to Aksai Chin was a bit vaguely put forward by a colour-wash with the words 'Boundary Undefined' marked on it.

(xii) On the other hand, we find in the recently opened records of the India Office, a map of India marked 'Top Secret', which the General Staff of the British Indian Government submitted to the British Cabinet Mission (1946) along with their report on the defence problems of free India. In this very important official map produced just prior to the transfer of power in India, we find there was no indication of a definite border line in the western and the middle sectors of the northern frontier of India, and particularly there was no attempt to push the Kashmir frontier east of the Karakoram pass northward beyond the Karakoram mountains so as to include Aksai Chin within India. This map clearly indicated that the British left India with a legacy of undefined northern border in the western as well as middle sectors. (This map, however, shows the north-eastern border of India along with high ridge of the Himalayas, i.e. the McMahon Line, though the writ of the British Raj had not yet reached beyond Dirangdong-Walong line.)

(xiv) The late Sir H. A. F. Rumbold, who had been a senior official in the India office, London, since the 1920s, made the following comments about the ill-advised policy of the Government of India in regard to the northern frontier, particularly in the western sector : "The basic trouble is that, whereas the Raj aimed at borders in the remote areas of the Himalayas and Karakoram mountains which were administratively convenient and were ready to be flexible about them, independent India elevated lines drawn by cartographers into status symbols with

the sanctity of Holy Writ. In the northwest, in the frozen, uninhabitable, wilderness of Aksai Chin, where 200 miles separated the areas in which Indian or Tibetan authority ran, there was no need of a defined frontier in the days of the Raj; and...there was none." He also added: "In 1929 the Simon Commission wished to include a map of India in volume 1 of their report, and the question arose how India's northern frontiers should be shown. In researching this point for them, I found nothing in the India Office records to justify the line on the Kuenlun range indicated in some maps; the Commission's map accordingly adopted a line roughly along the crest of the Karakoram range, excluding the Aksai Chin. But the post-independence Government of India fought a war over this worthless area" (*Asian Affairs*, June 1977, pp. 210-12).

(xv) In the context of this testimony of the H. A. F. Rumbold as well as the map of India presented to the British Cabinet Mission in 1946 by the Army General Staff, we can say definitely that the Historical Division of the External Affairs Ministry of the Government of India misguided the Indian Cabinet when they categorically described the northern border particularly in the section eastward from the Karakoram Pass as follows: "From the Karakoram Pass this boundary proceeds northeast via the Qaratagh Pass and then follows the Kuenlun range from a point 15 miles north of Haji Langar to Peak 21250 (*Survey of India Map*) which lies east of Longitude 80 east". (*White Paper*, No. 11, pp. 19-24). Further, they falsely presented: "This line constitutes the watershed between the Indus system and the Khotan system in China." According to the *Imperial Gazetteer of India* (1908, vol. xv, p. 84) eminent geographers like Dr. Sven Hedin, Owen Lattimore as well as *Chamber's Gazette* (1962), *Columbia Encyclopedia* (1963), the Karakoram mountain forms the main water divide in this region. So this was a case of distortion of history as well as geography.

(xvi) In his convocation address to the Indian School of International Studies, New Delhi, on 13 December 1969 Mr. K. P. S. Menon, referred to the Sino-Indian border dispute and said that he had a hope that a settlement could be reached under

which the Chinese Government would recognize the McMahon Line, which no previous Chinese Government had recognized, in return for some recognition on our part of Chinese claims in the disputed Aksai Chin area. He stressed : "I deliberately say 'disputed', because maps, treaties, agreements, and other documents on which both sides rely cannot be said to place the boundary, as conceived by either party, beyond the region of doubt or the need for negotiation. The watershed principle on which we have heavily relied in other sectors of the frontier, is, in the Aksai Chin area, not in our favour. (*The Sixties in Retrospect*, p. 12).

SARDAR PATEL'S LETTER TO JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

Dated 7 November, 1950

My Dear Jawaharlal,

Ever since my return from Ahmedabad and after the Cabinet meeting the same day which I had to attend at practically fifteen minutes' notice and for which I regret I was not able to read all the papers, I have been anxiously thinking over the problem of Tibet and I thought I should share with you what is passing through my mind.

I have carefully gone through the correspondence between the External Affairs Ministry and our Ambassador in Peking and through him the Chinese Government. I have tried to peruse this correspondence as favourably to our Ambassador and the Chinese Government as possible, but I regret to say that neither of them comes out well as a result of this study.

The Chinese Government have tried to delude us by professions of peaceful intentions. My own feeling is that at a crucial period they managed to instil into our Ambassador a false sense of confidence in their so-called desire to settle the Tibetan problem by peaceful means.

There can be no doubt that, during the period covered by this correspondence, the Chinese must have been concentrating for an onslaught on Tibet. The final action of the Chinese, in my judgement, is little short of perfidy.

The tragedy of it is that the Tibetans put faith in us ; they chose to be guided by us ; and we have been unable to get them out of the meshes of Chinese diplomacy or Chinese malevolence. From the latest position, it appears that we shall not be able to rescue the Dalai Lama.

Our Ambassador has been at great pains to find an explanation or justification for Chinese policy and actions. As the External Affairs Ministry remarked in one of their telegrams, there was a lack of firmness and unnecessary apology in one or two re-

presentations that he made to the Chinese Government on our behalf. It is impossible to imagine any sensible person believing in the so-called threat to China from Anglo-American machinations in Tibet. Therefore, if the Chinese put faith in this, they must have distrusted us so completely as to have taken us as tools or stooges of Anglo-American diplomacy or strategy. This feeling, if genuinely entertained by the Chinese in spite of your direct approaches to them, indicates that, even though we regard ourselves as the friends of China, the Chinese do not regard us as their friends. With the Communist mentality of "Whoever is not with them being against them," this is a significant pointer, of which we have to take due note.

During the last several months, outside the Russian camp, we have practically been alone in championing the cause of Chinese entry into the UNO and in securing from the Americans assurances on the question of Formosa. We have done everything we could to assuage Chinese feelings, to allay their apprehensions and to defend their legitimate claims, in our discussions and correspondence with America and Britain and in the UNO. In spite of this, China is not convinced about our disinterestedness ; it continues to regard us with suspicion and the whole psychology is one, at least outwardly, of scepticism perhaps mixed with a little hostility.

I doubt if we can go any further than we have done already to convince China of our good intentions, friendliness and goodwill. In Peking we have an Ambassador who is eminently suitable for putting across the friendly point of view. Even he seems to have failed to convert the Chinese. Their last telegram to us is an act of gross discourtesy not only in the summary way it disposes of our protest against the entry of Chinese forces into Tibet but also in the wild insinuation that our attitude is determined by foreign influences.

It looks as though it is not a friend speaking in that language but a potential enemy.

In the background of this, we have to consider what new situation now faces us as a result of the disappearance of Tibet, as we know it, and the expansion of China almost up to our gates.

Throughout history, we have seldom been worried about our north-east frontier. The Himalayas have been regarded as an impenetrable barrier against any threat from the north. We had a friendly Tibet which gave us no trouble. The Chinese were divided. They had their own domestic problems and never bothered us about our frontiers.

In 1914, we entered into a convention with Tibet which was not endorsed by the Chinese. We seem to have regarded Tibetan autonomy as extending to independent treaty relationship. Presumably, all that we required was Chinese counter-signature. The Chinese interpretation of suzerainty seems to be different. We can, therefore, safely assume that very soon they will disown all the stipulations which Tibet has entered into with us in the past. That throws into the melting pot all frontier and commercial settlements with Tibet on which we have been functioning and acting during the last half a century.

China is no longer divided. It is united and strong. All along the Himalayas in the north and north-east, we have, on our side of the frontier, a population ethnologically and culturally not different from Tibetans or Mongoloids.

The undefined state of the frontier and the existence on our side of population with its affinities to Tibetans or Chinese have all the elements of potential trouble between China and ourselves. Recent and bitter history also tells us that Communism is no shield against imperialism and that Communists are as good or as bad as imperialists as any other. Chinese ambitions in this respect not only cover the Himalayan slopes on our side but also include important parts of Assam.

They have their ambitions in Burma also. Burma has the added difficulty that it has no McMahon line round which to build up even the semblance of an agreement.

Chinese irredentism and Communist imperialism are different from the expansionism or imperialism of the Western powers. The former has a cloak of ideology which makes it ten times more dangerous. In the guise of ideological expansion lie concealed racial, national and historical claims.

The danger from the north and north-east, therefore, becomes

both communist and imperialist: While our western and north-western threats to security are still as prominent as before, a new threat has developed from the north and north-east. *Thus, for the first time, after centuries, India's defence has to concentrate itself on two fronts simultaneously.* Our defence measures have so far been based on the calculations of a superiority over Pakistan.

In our calculations we shall now have to reckon with Communist China in 'the north and north-east—a Communist China which has definite ambitions and aims and which does not, in any way, seem friendly disposed towards us.

Let me also consider the political considerations on this potentially troublesome frontier. Our northern or north-eastern approaches consist of Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Darjeeling and the tribal areas in Assam. From the point of view of communications they are weak spots. Continuous defensive lines do not exist. There is almost an unlimited scope for infiltration. Police protection is limited to a very small number of passes. There too, our outposts do not seem to be fully manned.

The contact of these areas with us, is, by no means close and intimate. The people inhabiting these portions have no established loyalty or devotion to India. Even Darjeeling and Kalimpong areas are not free from pro-Mongoloid prejudices. During the last three years, we have not been able to make any appreciable approaches to the Nagas and other hill tribes in Assam. European missionaries and other visitors had been in touch with them, but their influence was, in no way, friendly to India or Indians. In Sikkim, there was political ferment some time ago. It is quite possible that discontent is smouldering there. Bhutan is comparatively quiet, but its affinity with Tibetans would be a handicap. Nepal has a weak oligarchic regime based almost entirely on force; it is in conflict with a turbulent element of the population as well as with enlightened ideas of the modern age.

In these circumstances, to make people alive to the new danger or to make them defensively strong is a very difficult task indeed and that difficulty can be got over only by enlightened firmness, strength and a clear line of policy. I am sure the Chinese and their source of inspiration, Soviet Russia, would not miss any

opportunity of exploiting these weak spots, partly in support of their ideology and partly in support of their ambitions.

In my judgement, therefore, the situation is one in which we cannot afford either to be complacent or to be vacillating. We must have a clear idea of what we wish to achieve and also of the methods by which we should achieve it. Any faltering or lack of decisiveness in formulating our objectives or in pursuing our policy to attain those objectives is bound to weaken us and increase the threats which are so evident.

Side by side with these external dangers we shall now have to face serious internal problems as well. I have already asked Iengar to send to the External Affairs Ministry a copy of the Intelligence Bureau's appreciation of these matters. Hitherto, the Communist Party of India has found some difficulty in contacting Communist abroad, or in getting supplies of arms, literature, etc. from them. They had to contend with difficult Burmese and Pakistan frontiers on the east or with the long seaboard.

They will now have a comparatively easy means of access to Chinese Communists and through them to other foreign Communists. Infiltration of spies, fifth columnists and communists would now be easier. Instead of having to deal with isolated Communist pockets in Telengana and Warangal we may have to deal with Communist threats to our security along our northern and north-eastern frontiers where, for supplies of arms and ammunition, they can safely depend on Communist arsenals in China.

The whole situation thus raises a number of problems on which we must come to an early decision so that we can, as said earlier, formulate the objectives of our policy and decide the methods by which those actions will have to be fairly comprehensive involving not only our defence strategy and state of preparation but also problems of internal security to deal with which we have not a moment to lose. We shall also have to deal with administrative and political problems in the weak spots along the frontier to which I have already referred.

It is, of course, impossible for me to be exhaustive in setting out all these problems. I am however giving below some of the problems, which, in my opinion, require early solution and round

which we have to build our administrative or military policies and measures to implement them.

(a) A military and intelligence appreciation of the Chinese threat to India both on the frontier and to internal security.

(b) An examination of our military position and such redistribution of our forces as might be necessary, particularly with the idea guarding important routes or areas which are likely to be the subject of dispute.

(c) An appraisalment of the strength of our forces and, if necessary, reconsideration of our retrenchment plans for the Army in the light of these new threats.

(d) A long-term consideration of our defence needs. My own feeling is that unless we assure our supplies of arms, ammunition and armour, we would be making our defence position perpetually weak and we would not be able to stand up to the double threat of difficulties both from the west and north-west and north and north-east.

(e) The question of Chinese entry into the UNO. In view of the rebuff which China has given us and the method which it has followed in dealing with Tibet, I am doubtful whether we can advocate its claims any longer. There would probably be a threat in the UNO virtually to outlaw China, in view of its active participation in the Korean war. We must determine our attitude on this question also.

(f) The political and administrative steps which we should take to strengthen our northern and north-eastern frontiers. This would include the whole of the border i.e. Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Darjeeling and the tribal territory in Assam.

(g) Measures of internal security in the border areas as well as the States flanking those areas such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal and Assam.

(h) Improvement of our communications, road, rail, air and wireless, in these areas, and with the frontier outposts.

(i) Policing and intelligence of frontier posts.

(j) The future of our mission at Lhasa and the trade posts at Gyantse and Yatung and the forces which we have in operation in Tibet to guard the trade routes.

(k) The policy in regard to McMahon Line.

These are some of the questions which occur to my mind. It is possible that a consideration of these matters may lead us into wider questions of our relationship with China, Russia, America, Britain and Burma. This, however, would be of a general nature, though some might be basically very important, e.g., we might have to consider whether we should not enter into closer association with Burma in order to strengthen the latter in the dealings with China. I do not rule out the possibility that, before applying pressure on us, China might apply pressure on Burma. With Burma, the frontier is entirely undefined and the Chinese territorial claims are more substantial. In its present position, Burma might offer an easier problem for China and, therefore, might claim its first attention.

I suggest that we meet early to have a general discussion on these problems and decide on such steps as we might think to be immediately necessary and direct quick examination of other problems with a view to taking early measures to deal with them.

PRIME MINISTER NEHRU'S NOTE ON CHINA AND TIBET

Dated 18 November, 1950.

The Chinese Government having replied to our last note, we have to consider what further steps we should take in this matter. There is no immediate hurry about sending a reply to the Chinese Government. But we have to send immediate instructions to Shri B. N. Rau as to what he should do in the event of Tibet's appeal being brought up before the Security Council or the General Assembly.

2. The content of the Chinese reply is much the same as their previous notes, but there does appear to be a toning down and an attempt at some kind of a friendly approach.

3. It is interesting to note that they have not referred specifically to our mission (at) Lhasa or to our trade agents or military escort at Gyantse etc. We had mentioned these especially in our last note. There is an indirect reference, however, in China's note. At the end, this note says that "As long as our two sides adhere strictly to the principle of mutual respect for territory, sovereignty, equality and mutual benefit, we are convinced that the friendship between China and India should be developed in a normal way and that 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." This clearly refers to our trade agents and others in Tibet. We had expected a demand from them for the withdrawal of these agents etc. The fact that they have not done so has some significance.

4. Stress is laid in China's note on Chinese sovereignty over Tibet, which we are reminded, we have acknowledged, on Tibet being an integral part of China's territory and therefore a domestic problem. It is however again repeated that outside influences, have been at play obstructing China's mission in Tibet. In fact,

it is stated that liberation of Changtu proves that foreign forces and influences were inciting Tibetan troops to resist. It is again repeated that no foreign intervention will be permitted and that the Chinese army will proceed.

5. All this is much the same as has been said before, but it is said in a somewhat different way and there are repeated references in the note to China desiring the friendship of India.

6. It is true that in one of our messages to the Chinese Government we used "sovereignty" of China in relation to Tihet. In our last message we used the word "suzerainty". After receipt of the last China's note, we have pointed out to our Ambassador that "suzerainty" was the right word and that "sovereignty" had been used by error.

7. It is easy to draft a reply to the Chinese note, pressing our viewpoint and countering some of the arguments raised in the Chinese note. But before we do so we should be clear in our own minds as to what we are aiming at, not only in the immediate future but from a long-term view. It is important that we keep both these viewpoints before us. In all probability China, that is present-day China, is going to be our close neighbour for a long time to come. We are going to have a tremendously long common frontier. It is unlikely, and it would be unwise to expect, that the present Chinese Government will collapse, giving place to another. Therefore, it is important to pursue a policy which will be in keeping with this long-term view.

8. I think it may be taken for granted that China will take possession, in a political sense at least, of the whole of Tibet. There is no likelihood whatever of Tibet being able to resist this or stop it. It is equally unlikely that any foreign power can prevent it. We cannot do so. If so, what can we do to help in the maintenance of Tibetan autonomy and at the same time avoiding continuous tension and apprehension on our frontiers?

9. The Chinese note has repeated that they wish to Tibetan people to have what they call "regional autonomy and religious freedom." This autonomy an obviously not be anything like the autonomy verging on independence which Tibet has enjoyed during the last forty years or so. But it is reasonable to assume from the

very nature of Tibetan geography, terrain and climate, that a large measure of autonomy is almost inevitable. It may of course be that this autonomous Tibet is controlled by communist elements in Tibet. I imagine however that it is, on the whole, more likely that what will be attempted will be a pro-communist China administration rather than a communist one.

10. If world war comes, then all kinds of difficult and intricate problems arise and each one of these problems will be interrelated with others. Even the question of defence of India assumes a different shape and cannot be isolated from other world factors. I think that it is exceedingly unlikely that we may have to face any real military invasion from the Chinese side, whether in peace or in war, in the foreseeable future. I base this conclusion on a consideration of various world factors. In peace, such an invasion would undoubtedly lead to world war. China, though internally big, is in a way amorphous and easily capable of being attacked on its sea coasts and by air. In such a war, China would have its main front in the South and East and it will be fighting for its very existence against powerful enemies. It is inconceivable that it should divert its forces and its strength across the inhospitable terrain of Tibet and undertake a wild adventure across the Himalays. Any such attempt will greatly weaken its capacity to meet its real enemies on other fronts. Thus I rule out any major attack on India by China. I think these considerations should be borne in mind, because there is far too much loose talk about China attacking and overrunning India. If we lose our sense of perspective and world strategy and give way to unreasoning fears, then any policy that we might have is likely to fail.

11. While there is, in any opinion, practically no chance of a major attack on India by China, there are certainly chances of gradual infiltration across our border and possibly of entering and taking possession of 'disputed territory', if there is no obstruction to this happening. We must therefore take all necessary precautions to prevent this. But, again, we must differentiate between these precautions and those that might be necessary to meet a real attack.

12. If we really feared an attack and had to make full

provision for it, this would cost an intolerable burden on us, financial and otherwise, and it would weaken our general defence position. There are limits beyond which we cannot go, at least for some years, and a spreading out of our army on distant frontiers would be bad from every military or strategic point of view.

13. In spite of our desire to settle the points at issue between us and Pakistan, and developing peaceful relations with it, the fact remains that our major possible enemy is Pakistan. This has compelled us to think of our defence mainly in terms of Pakistan's aggression. If we begin to think of, and prepare for, China's aggression in the same way, we would weaken considerably on the Pakistan side. We might well be got in a pincer movement. It is interesting to note that Pakistan is taking a great deal of interest, from this point of view, in developments in Tibet. Indeed it has been discussed in the Pakistan Press that the new danger from Tibet to India might help them to settle the Kashmir problem according to their wishes. Pakistan has absolutely nothing in common with China or Tibet. But if we fall out completely with China, Pakistan will undoubtedly try to take advantage of this, politically or otherwise. The position of India thus will be bad from a defence point of view. We cannot have all the time two possible enemies on either side of India. This danger will not be got over, even if we increase our defence forces or even if other foreign countries help us in arming. The measure of safety that one gets by increasing the defence apparatus is limited by many factors. But whatever that measure of safety might be, strategically we would be in an unsound position and the burden of this will be very great on us. As it is, we are facing enormous difficulties, financial economic, etc.

14. The idea that communism inevitably means expansion and war, or to put it more precisely, that Chinese communism means inevitably an expansion towards India, is rather naive. It may mean that in certain circumstances. Those circumstances would depend upon many factors, which I need not go into here. The danger really is not from military invasion but from infiltration of men and ideas. The ideas are there already and can only be

countred by other ideas. Communism is an important element in the situation. But, by our attaching too great importance to it in this context, we are likely to misjudge the situation from other and more important angles.

15. In a long-term view, India and China are two of the biggest countries of Asia bordering on each other and both with certain expansive tendencies, because of their vitality. If their relations are bad, this will have a serious effect not only on both of them but on Asia as a whole. It would affect our future for a long time. If a position arises in which China and India are inveterately hostile to each other, like France and Germany, then there will be repeated wars bringing destruction to both. The advantage will go to other countries. It is interesting to note that both the UK and USA appear to be anxious to add to the unfriendliness of India and China towards each other. It is also interesting to find that the USSR does not view with favour any friendly relations between India and China. These are long-term reactions which one can fully understand, because India and China at peace with each other would make a vast difference to the whole setup and balance of the world. Much of course depends upon the development of either country and how far communism in China will mould the Chinese people. Even so, these processes are long-range ones and in the long run it is fairly safe to assume that hundreds of millions of people will not change their essential characteristics.

16. These arguments lead to the conclusion that while we should be prepared, to the best of our ability, for all contingencies, the real protection that we should seek is some kind of understanding of China. If we have not got that, then both our present and our future are imperilled and no distant power can save us. I think on the whole that China desires this too for obvious reasons. If this is so, then we should fashion our present policy accordingly.

17. We cannot save Tibet, as we should have liked to do, and our very attempts to save it might well bring greater trouble to it. It would be unfair to Tibet for us to bring this trouble upon her without having the capacity to help her effectively. It may be possible, however, that we might be able to help Tibet to

retain a large measure of her autonomy. That would be good for Tibet and good for India. As far as I can see, this can only be done on the diplomatic level and by avoidance of making the present tension between India and China worse.

18. What then should be our instructions to B. N. Rau? From the messages he has sent us, it appears that no member of the Security Council shows any inclination to sponsor Tibet's appeal and that there is little likelihood of the matter being considered by the Council. We have said that (we) are not going to sponsor this appeal, but if it comes up we shall state our viewpoint. This viewpoint cannot be one of full support of the Tibetan appeal, because that goes far and claims full independence. We may say that whatever might have been acknowledged in the past about China's sovereignty or suzerainty, recent events have deprived China of the right to claim that. There may be some moral basis for this argument. But it will not take us or Tibet very far. It will only hasten the downfall of Tibet. No outsider will be able to help her, and China, suspicious and apprehensive of these tactics, will make sure of much speedier and fuller possession of Tibet than she might otherwise have done. We shall thus not only fail in our endeavour but at the same time have really a hostile China on our doorstep.

19. I think that in no event should we sponsor Tibet's appeal. I would personally think that it would be a good thing if that appeal is not heard in the Security Council or the General Assembly. If it is considered there, there is bound to be a great deal of bitter speaking and accusation, which will worsen the situation as regards Tibet, as well as the possibility of widespread war, without helping it in the least. It must be remembered that neither the UK nor the USA, nor indeed any other power is particularly interested in Tibet or the future of that country. What they are interested in is embarrassing China. Our interest, on the other hand, is Tibet, and if we cannot serve that interest, we fail.

20. Therefore, it will be better not to discuss Tibet's appeal in the U N. Suppose, however, that it comes up for discussion, in spite of our not wishing this, what then? I would suggest

PRIME MINISTER NEHRU'S NOTE ON CHINA AND TIBET

that our representative should state our case as moderately as possible and ask the Security Council or the Assembly to give expression to their desire that the Sino-Tibetan question should be settled peacefully and that Tibet's autonomy should be respected and maintained. Any particular reference to an article of the Charter of the UN might tie us up in difficulties and lead to certain consequences later, which may prove highly embarrassing for us. Or a resolution of the UN might just be a dead letter, which also will be bad.

21. If my general argument is approved, then we can frame our reply to China's note accordingly.

18 November, 1950

J. Nehru*

* SOURCE: *Sardar Patel's Correspondence, 1945-50, Volume 10*, edited by Durga Das, pp. 342-347.

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40	I	30	with	to
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52	3	9	take	rake
64	2	14	from	form
65	1	15	national	nationalist
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72	2	3	broder	border
73	1	3	disingenous	disingenuous
76	2	11	because it was	because of the
78	3	1	Nethru's	Nehru's
80	3	7	bound	bend
83	1	13	benn	been
84	1	1	North-east	North and North-east
84	1	19	broder	border
85	2	17	clearnce	clearance
87	1	25	be	he
91	6	3	Vidya Praksh	Vidya prakash
92	3	17	on	of
93	—	last line	Tibetan overloard	Tibet's overlord
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