

INDIA TIBET AND CHINA

The Role Nehru Played

Ajay B. Agrawal

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Dedication

I most humbly dedicate this book to the memory of Gampo Tashi Andrugtsang, his comrades and all other guerillas who worked for the freedom of Tibet. Alas! They did not get the outside help required. But they demonstrated it in ample measure that had the outside world come to their help they would have succeeded in preserving their freedom; to whatever extent.

I also dedicate it to those Tibetans who knew that their beloved country was always free till its subjugation by the Chinese. They bravely challenged the Chinese forceful occupation of their beloved land.

All of them suffered. Most of them the very repressive and cruel methods adopted by the Chinese! This is the fate of those who have fought for freedom throughout the ages anywhere in the world. In the matter of Tibet the outside world came to know the least about the fate of the freedom fighters.

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Preface

Tibet was a free country up to 1950. In that year it lost its freedom. Next year the Chinese armed forces entered Lhasa without a single shot being fired by the Tibetans. Such an act was unthinkable in the past. Generally they would have reacted strongly and forcefully. How did it happen? Independent India's first prime-minister Jawahar Lal Nehru played a major role in the whole affair. He was largely responsible for the loss of Tibetan independence. For the first time his role has been put in correct perspective. And the full story of his role and intentions has been brought out. A clear case has been made out to show how because of his actions a nation ceased to exist. Had he not interfered in the matter of Tibet in 1950 the results would have been far better.

Had Nehru truly been a worthwhile statesman he would have stood up to face the Chinese menace when it arose in 1949-50 in the matter of Tibet. But it should be seen in the light of the fact that he was not even capable of protecting Indian borders from the Chinese even twelve years later. There was no question of his standing in defence of Tibet. How he manipulated the situation in respect of Tibet and defence of Indian borders is the subject matter of this book.

This book deals with the general perception in India that China attacked India by deceit in 1962. Was it really so? Is it that all was well between India and China till one fine morning when China attacked India all of a sudden? Nothing can be further from truth. This book deals with the circumstances that finally lead to the war of 1962 and the defeat that India faced. The West accepted the Indian version of the war till the sixties. Now it gives more credence to the Chinese point of view. They ignore completely the way the Chinese encroached upon Indian borders. That has been put in correct perspective in this book.

Unfolding of the Tragedy

Chinese Threat and the Status of Tibet

In 1949-50 Peking Radio spoke again and again of liberating Tibet. In a most threatening voice it announced, "Liberate we will; come what may." Just a year back a free Tibet had forced all the Chinese out of Tibet. A year after that the Chinese were a threat to the very existence of Tibet as a free state! The new communist government of China had developed a new terminology wherein liberation meant subjugation. By the end of 1950, the Chinese attacked Tibet and within a year they achieved what they called "liberation of Tibet": Tibet lost its independence. As things stood; only India could have helped it. The then Indian government developed cold feet and not only did they not help Tibet, but behaved like an agent of the Chinese.

Tibet was a free country up to 1950. Indians who had any dealings with Tibet could go there at the pleasure of the Tibetan government. The Indian government dealt directly with the government of Tibet. China was nowhere in the picture in any way. In 1950 India had a political officer in Tibet. He was there at the pleasure of the Tibetan government. At the same time China had no such representative in Tibet as it had not allowed China to have one.

At the time of formation of the interim government in Delhi in 1946, the government of Tibet sent a telegram to congratulate Nehru, the then head of the government. Nehru replied, "*My colleagues and I am most grateful for your kind message. We look forward with confidence to the continuance and strengthening of the close and cordial relation which had existed between our two countries since ancient times.*"¹ An independent Tibetan government had congratulated Nehru and he had replied to the message. China had nothing to do with it. In his book 'Glimpses of world history' Nehru had referred to Tibet as a free country.

Many examples can be given to prove the independent status of Tibet.

India had organized a conference of the countries of Asia in Delhi. Nehru kept Mahatma Gandhi informed in this regard. On 30th January, 1947 Nehru wrote to Mahatma Gandhi, "Almost every country of Asia from the west to the east and south including the Arab countries, Tibet, Mongoliawill be represented (at the Inter Asian Relations Conference)." ² China and Tibet both attended that conference as independent countries. China had protested at the presence of Tibet as a free country as it questioned the free status of Tibet. But as China had absolutely no control over Tibet it could not prevent the latter from attending the conference.

Even at that time Nehru (herein after referred as PM at times) showed his weakness by not taking a bold stand. He wondered how Tibet was there and did not emphasize that Tibet was a free country. Otherwise, even as late as 1949, he had referred to friendly relations with Tibet, Nepal, and all neighboring countries ³. Actually China was never India's neighbor in the past. Only Tibet was India's neighbour. By accepting Tibet as part of China, India was foolish enough to give China legitimacy to be on India's border for the first time in history and allow it to grab areas which India claimed as its own.

In 1948 the Nationalist government of China informed India that the Tibetan Trade Regulations of 1908 were due for revision.....After some delay, the Government of India replied that the trade regulations of 1908 were no longer valid, as these had been replaced by the Simla convention of 1914. ⁴ By taking this stand India recognized the free status of Tibet. Tibet had attended the 1914 conference on equal footing with India and China. At that conference Tibet had signed the agreement as a free country.

Even today India claims McMahon Line to be its international border with China. China had never accepted the McMahon Line. Only Tibet had accepted that. India does not accept Tibet as a free country but stands by an agreement that took place between a free Tibet and India. India has put itself into this foolish situation by denying the fact of Tibet's independence. The agreement of the year 1914 was accepted by the representatives of India, Tibet and China. But finally the Chinese government had rejected the agreement.

Again, China had rejected it not because of any differences regarding McMahon Line but because they did not agree to the border between Tibet and itself. Had Tibet been part of China, there was no need to settle the border between Tibet and China at a conference where Britain was also present. Had China accepted the agreement of 1914, China would have accepted its very much-restricted role in Tibet in return for suzerainty over Tibet. As China had not accepted the agreement Britain had made it clear that China had no suzerainty over Tibet. Soon after the declaration of this agreement between India (then British India) and Tibet, The Thirteenth Dalai Lama declared Tibet as an independent country. And right up to the beginning of 1950 Tibet was a free country.

This factual position of Tibet has been very beautifully brought out by Trikam Das who stated, "From 1911 to 1950 there was no Chinese law, no Chinese judge, no Chinese policeman on the street corner, there was no Chinese newspaper, no Chinese soldier, and even no representative of the Chinese Government."⁵ To this we can add that there was no Chinese postal system, no Chinese language and no Chinese monetary system in Tibet. The same was the case before 1911; except that the Chinese representative was there for about two hundred years before that. The present Dalai Lama has pointed out that in the Tibetan literature there is no reference to rivers of China. Indian rivers have been referred to time and again. Actually China had no regular links with Tibet. So much so that when the Chinese soldiers who had attacked Tibet in 1910 had to be sent back to China in 1911-12 they had to go via Calcutta. Even after the Chinese attacked Tibet in 1950, the first Chinese Governor General of Tibet went to Lhasa via Calcutta and Kalimpong.

When the present Dalai Lama was found in Amdo province in north-east Tibet, the area was under Chinese rule. The search party that had gone in search of the Dalai Lama wanted to send a message about Dalai Lama to Lhasa. But Amdo had no direct links with the Capital of Tibet. So the message had to go to China. As China did not have direct link with Lhasa the message reached Lhasa via India. This clearly illustrates how poor the relations were between Tibet and China.

The independent status of Tibet was accepted by Mullick. He was India's former Director General of Intelligence Bureau, who

had a very good rapport with Nehru throughout his career. He wrote in his book, "But that Tibet was effectively independent was proved by another important development that took place in 1942-45, during World War II. The Japanese had sealed off all the Chinese seaports and so it was essential for China to have an overland route to get the much needed military supplies from Britain and America and this was possible only through Tibet. In spite of repeated persuasions by the British, the Tibetan government declared its neutrality in the war between China and Japan and refused to allow any military supplies to pass through its territory.....This is a clear indication of the sovereign rights which Tibet exercised at the time. If Tibet was politically a part of China, its declaration of neutrality in the life and death struggle of the Chinese with the Japanesecould not have taken place"⁶. Chiang Kai Shek's adviser Shenhad mentioned in his book that "since 1911, Lhasa had enjoyed full independence for all practical purposes"⁷. "There is no basis whatsoever in history for the Chinese to claim that Tibet is a part of China"⁸

Buddhism reached China from south at least four hundred years before it reached Tibet. Maybe the first introduction of Buddhism in Tibet took place from the Chinese side. The ruler of Tibet (Tibetan king Song-Tsen-Gampo who was born in the year 629 A.D.) had reached the border of China and the Chinese king married off his daughter to the Tibetan ruler to avoid war. The princess was a Buddhist. That is how Buddhism was introduced in Tibet. After the beginning of Buddhism in Tibet all knowledge regarding Buddhism reached Tibet from India and exchange of knowledge between the two countries continued for many centuries. Tibetan language's grammar and alphabet is also influenced by Sanskrit.

A thousand and five hundred years ago about two hundred Chinese pilgrims visited India within a period of two hundred years from north - west of China. The shortest route to India was through Tibet. But so poor were the relations between Tibet and China that not a single pilgrim took that route. All of them took the long, difficult and dangerous route of Takla Makan desert north of Tibet. All this prove the independent status of Tibet.

1950 and thereafter

From the beginning of the twentieth century Britain had played a prominent role in shaping the foreign policy of Tibet. The independent status of Tibet at the beginning of 1950 was the result of British policy. Britain had achieved that by years of meticulous planning and highest diplomatic skills. In a fast changing world they had kept China and Russia away from interfering in the affairs of Tibet. This policy had served the best interests of British India and Tibet. Independent India also treated Tibet as a free country. *"Tibet was plainly in India's interest, and therefore the new Government, like the old, directed its policy to that end"*.⁹ India had always dealt with a free Tibet for thousands of years. But all this was to change soon.

Many factors were acting against the interests of Tibet in the beginning of 1950. The present Dalai Lama was only fifteen years old then. In India Nehru was the Prime Minister, who was totally incapable of taking on the Chinese. In China civil war was going on between the Nationalists and Communist for many years. Finally in October 1949 the communists decisively defeated the Nationalists. After the civil war a strong Communist regime was taking shape in China. On 1st January 1950, the Chinese declared that one of the basic tasks of the People's Liberation Army during 1950 was the 'Liberation of Tibet.'

No sooner did China make this statement that Nehru decided to drop Tibet like a hot potato. His act should be seen in the light of the fact that he was not capable of defending Indian borders from the Chinese even twelve years later (1962 A.D.). So there was no question of him doing anything about Tibet.

It appears he had a mental block as far as aggression of any sort was concerned. His reaction in the matter of Kashmir illustrates his mindset. "In October 1947 he had declined to send troops to Kashmir. Patel and Abdullah had to persuade him to change his mind."¹⁰ Gopal further says "Later Nehru took the matter to U.N. when Patel and Gandhi were opposed to it."¹¹ again, "Gandhi was clear that the troops of Pakistan had to be driven out."¹²

In the matter of Hyderabad where the ruler was reluctant to join the Indian state, "Everybody was clear that military action was inevitable in case of Hyderabad. But Nehru was reculant"¹³.

“In 1950 the problem of Goa was being discussed.....Patel said, ‘Shall we go in? It is two hours work.’ Nehru resisted this suggestion vehemently.”¹⁴

As long as there was no resistance from any quarters, Nehru followed the policy of the British in Tibet but as soon as China showed aggressive designs he backed out. He nowhere showed his determination to safeguard Indian interests in Tibet. This was a golden opportunity for China to subjugate Tibet when Dalai Lama was young and Nehru had no courage to face it. For the Chinese there was no need for deceit. They had realized fully well that with Nehru, an aggressive stance would pay them rich dividends.

He fully well knew that China would not settle for anything less than full sovereignty over Tibet and still he claimed to safeguard Tibetan autonomy. He was totally incapable of looking after India’s defence but still claimed to be capable of doing so. He claimed that the Chinese listened to him.¹⁵ At the same time he had to pacify the Indian people to whom Tibet was a free country. He had to convince them that he was working in the best interest of Tibet. Unfortunately, his actions would finally lead to Tibet being fully absorbed by China.

Nehru must have calculated that if he allowed China to grab Tibet and also did whatever he could to befriend China then all would end well. And in the bargain he could also lay claim to being a man with remarkable foresight. Alas, only he could see the great friend in China! If he could handle China then he would prove his opponents wrong and he would have the last laugh. But such plans couldn’t be revealed to any body so he kept everybody confused throughout. Nobody could understand his illogical policies. In the end nothing was gained.

Rebirth of suzerainty

To give shape to his designs, Nehru resurrected Tibetan suzerainty from the graveyard. His move was resisted vigorously, as we shall see later. Before the Chinese threat suzerainty was nowhere in the picture. At a press conference on 16th

november1949 Nehru was asked, "What will be the position of Tibet in relation to India?" He said, "*About the position of Tibet I may say that for the last 40 years or so there were direct relations between Tibet and India.*"¹⁶

On 6th January1950, he was asked at a press conference, "What is the status of Tibet? Has she any diplomatic status?"¹⁷

Nehru replied, "It has a definite diplomatic status. Our representative there—I do not know what he is called —definitely deals with the Tibetan authorities."¹⁸

Earlier, on 1st Dec.1949 Nehru wrote to the chief ministers, "Our policy had been rather vague about Tibet. It has been an inheritance from the British days. We have recognized the autonomy of Tibet under some kind of vague suzerainty of China. Strictly speaking, in law, we cannot deny that suzerainty. We would like Tibet to be autonomous and have direct dealings with us and we shall press for this."¹⁹ Slowly and slowly the Chinese were becoming more aggressive in their approach towards Tibet. That put him under pressure.

He was claiming the policy regarding Tibet to be vague. But the policy was quite clear. He was speaking about suzerainty, which he had himself resurrected from the graveyard. He was speaking about Tibetan autonomy but would forget it as per his convenience. There was no law that bound India to suzerainty and he would also forget about direct dealings with Tibet with the passage of time. And he would turn vague suzerainty into clear Chinese sovereignty in due course. He was speaking about Chinese suzerainty when China itself had not spoken at all about it.

The PM acknowledged the sovereign status of Tibet. He had written, 'In June 1912, the Dalai Lama had declared Tibet independent and assumed full sovereign rights.'²⁰ He had absolutely no good reason to bring suzerainty into the picture when it was long dead. For the first time this word was used in relation to Tibet in an agreement between Russia and Britain in the year 1907 to which neither Tibet nor China were a party. This term had a life span of seven years when in 1914 Britain buried it as China refused to rectify the 1914 Simla Convention. Even otherwise suzerainty was not a very significant term. Lord Curzon wrote to the secretary of state for India in 1903, 'Chinese suzerainty over Tibet is a political

affectation which had only been maintained because of its convenience to both the parties (Britain and China).²¹

The PM turned the fiction of suzerainty into a real monster. He needed this fiction of suzerainty to claim that he could not interfere in the matter of Tibet as China had suzerainty over it. As if otherwise the self proclaimed leader of the third world would have definitely come to the rescue of Tibet. Having committed himself in a way which was patently wrong, Nehru was at pains to justify his stand and was evasive when it came to accepting facts.

Krishna Menon had made a statement in London regarding Tibet. Politely, Nehru made it clear to him that in the matter of Tibet he did not want Menon to make any statement, 'Tibet is a very ticklish issue. We have to proceed rather cautiously in regard to it and we did not want it stated in public that we have been addressing the Chinese government on this subject. They are sensitive and this itself might create an undesirable reaction in them For some time past, I have been asked questions about Tibet at press conferences. I have answered them rather vaguely and tried to avoid any direct commitment.....press correspondents are pestering us or rather embarrassing us for a clear declaration of our policy in regard to Tibet. We do not intend any such clear declaration because whatever we may say may be embarrassing either from a Chinese or a Tibetan point of view.'²²

Next day he wrote to Panikkar, '.....in regard to Tibet, you know that we want to help in a friendly settlement, which should aim at the autonomy of Tibet being recognized together with Chinese suzerainty.'²³ Three days later Panikkar after meeting Zhou En Lai informed Nehru that China would accept nothing short of full Chinese sovereignty.²⁴ Nehru would help China to gain sovereignty over Tibet, but in open declaration he went on harping on his commitment to Tibetan autonomy. In one of its communications with China India duly referred to Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. When China made it known to the whole world, India declared it as a case of oversight and substituted sovereignty with suzerainty in its copy.

As per Lall, "I was told by a senior member of the Embassy that the mistake was deliberate."²⁵ There is good reason to believe Lall, as he was a responsible professional diplomat and was the

Dewan (Prime Minister) of Sikkim. When China published the text the word sovereignty was very much there.²⁶ Impression had gathered that Panikkar might have substituted sovereignty for suzerainty. Even Lall considered Panikkar to be the villain. But why should he do so. The PM needed it and not Panikkar. To Panikkar he wrote on 20th Nov.1950, "Regarding use of word "sovereignty" or "suzerainty", question is rather academic. We have always laid stress on autonomy of Tibet. Autonomy plus sovereignty leads to suzerainty. Words are not important. What we do attach value to is autonomy of Tibet."²⁷ Nehru had started juggling with words. In fact he was not committed to the autonomy of Tibet.

Nehru was using Panikkar then as he would use Kaul and Menon later.

China was determined to liberate Tibet. Nehru was repeatedly suggesting that China should liberate Tibet peacefully. This was a very tricky statement. For one thing it gave legitimacy to the Chinese action in Tibet. Only it needed to be done peacefully. The PM was ready to help if China cared to listen to him. "Nehru did not object to China's claim to assert its sovereignty in Tibet but only asked Peking to do it peacefully. "This was tantamount to asking a tiger to deal with a lamb mercifully."²⁸

Indian strategy was wrong from the very beginning. By the middle of 1950 China had started building up its forces in provinces bordering Tibet. Instead of challenging the Chinese or supporting the Tibetans India took the course of least resistance. At the same time it unsuccessfully tried to please China in other matters. "India's prompt recognition of Communist China and withdrawal of recognition of the Chiang Kai-Shek regime in Taiwan did not involve any favourable response from China. Both these actions of the government of India were taken for granted and derogatory criticism continued to appear in the Chinese press.....Even the recognition of Communist China was depicted as a hypocritical act on the part of Pandit Nehruthus putting India on the defensive from the very beginning."²⁹

India, through her Ambassador, had made several verbal representations to the Chinese government to settle the Tibetan question peacefully. Also India acquainted China regarding the rights it was enjoying in Tibet for long. But such rights had flowed from the British might and not from petitions to China. Of all things

Indian government was also telling China that its aggressive policy was coming in the way of China's entry into United Nations. As if China would mellow down with such gestures. The Chinese wrote on October 30, 1950, stressing that Tibet was an integral part of China, that Tibet was its domestic problem and that no foreign interference would be tolerated.

China said that if India found something wrong in the way in which it was dealing with Tibet then it was doing so because of foreign influence. Replying next day India again stressed the need for peaceful ways to liberate Tibet. This peaceful liberation issue was going too far. Nehru was simply trying to tell China that he was capable of delivering liberation peacefully if China would listen to him. China stated that if India stood by mutual respect of each other's territory, then it should not come in the way of China consolidating its border.

When Nehru was trying to be as conciliatory as was humanly possible; the Chinese were proving to be embodiment of arrogance. The Chinese ambassador in Delhi drew attention towards the Indian missions in Lhasa and the trade agencies at Yatung and Gyantse and also the existence of Indian military escorts in Tibet. As per China these violated Chinese sovereignty in Tibet. The ambassador had mentioned this in response to India's desire to maintain these facilities in Tibet, which it had enjoyed for many years. Up to now India had every justification to have these facilities in Tibet. India had received these facilities from a free Tibet. By accepting Chinese suzerainty over Tibet and by not challenging the Chinese move to liberate it; India had created a situation where it could not stop China from claiming sovereignty over Tibet. When China would gain control over Tibet it would depend on the pleasure of China whether India could continue with the facilities or not. In due course of time India quietly renounced these facilities without a murmur. Sardar Patel had expected this to happen long back.

Acceptance of Chinese claim of Tibet would not do any good to India or Tibet. Both would be losers. Only China succeeded in its designs on subjugating and absorbing Tibet.

Alarm in Tibet

Even before the Chinese declaration of 1st Jan. 1950. Peking radio was warning Tibet of invasion. "On September 10, 1949, the Peking radio announced that the People's Liberation Army was ready to liberate Tibet, and claimed that Tibet was Chinese territory and asserted that no foreign intervention would be tolerated."³⁰ "On Nov. 24, 1949, Peking radio broadcast a message of Mao Tse-tung encouraging the people of Tibet to overthrow the rule of Dalai Lama Broadcasts came on the air quite often about the Chinese intention and the readiness of the Peoples Liberation Army to liberate Tibet."³¹

The Chinese declaration of liberating Tibet was the most serious threat to its very existence. As Tibet had developed close relations with India and as only India had a political officer in Tibet, it looked towards India for help. Unfortunately, India had already written Tibet off. Tibetans definitely found themselves into a most hopeless situation. They had been living in a make believe world of their own almost totally cut off from the outside world. They were hardly prepared to take on the Chinese on equal terms. Only India could have helped them but Nehru had no courage to face the Chinese. Tibet could have got help from the outside world but such help could reach Tibet only through India. Nehru, the self declared leader of the third world had made it his mission to criticize the western countries day in and the day out. So they had to move cautiously. The Americans gave a hint that they were ready to help. But India did not agree. So they did not press further.

This was the most unfortunate situation in which the Tibetans found themselves. The Dalai Lama was only fifteen years old and the country was under the rule of a regent. The Chinese threat was ever present. "The task for the People's Liberation Army for 1950 is to liberate Formosa, Hainan, and Tibet from the American and British imperialists."³² Which imperialists the Chinese were referring to is not clear. Ford, a British national was in employ of the Tibetans at that crucial period. He also wrote a book about his experiences. Another European, Harrer, a German was soon to leave Tibet. Leaving these two, no other European was present in Tibet.

Tibet was always a free country. The Tibetans had no intention to take the threat lying down. On the diplomatic front it was decided to "send five goodwill missions to Britain, the United States, India, Nepal and Communist China."³³ Peking wanted to prevent any such show of independence by Tibet. It vehemently opposed this move. Britain and the United States were not ready to receive the Tibetan missions. Finally Tibet dropped the idea of sending those missions.³⁴ In the meantime Radio Peking was offering Tibet a peaceful liberation plus autonomy or a forced liberation. Tibet was warned not to depend on outside help or the difficulties which the Chinese might face. Come what may, liberation was a must.³⁵ All this must have unnerved Nehru more than the Tibetans. Had the Tibetans succeeded in getting the required arms the story of Tibet would have been very different today.

On the military front the Tibetan government decided to reorganize its army. New regiments were raised. Training grounds were set up for the troops. Affluent persons were asked to contribute to arm another one thousand men. The national assembly in Lhasa was meeting very often to discuss how best to meet the crisis.³⁶ Tibetans have a deep rooted faith in religion. Prayers have an important role to play. New prayer wheels and flags were put up. The scriptures were read aloud, temples were visited in large numbers and the state oracle was consulted. The prophecies were dark ones.

An independent Tibet was facing threat from an outside enemy- China. It was an independent Tibet strengthening its defenses against a powerful enemy. There were no Chinese in Tibet at the time. In Chamdo in eastern Tibet there were five hundred soldiers. Another five hundred were stationed at five days march towards north-west of Chamdo.³⁷ Remaining forces were at various frontier garrisons. The Tibetans also recruited the local Khambas for an auxiliary corps. They were determined to fight the Chinese, but with vast borders and limited resources it was impossible to contain the Chinese east of Chamdo; where the border with China was.

The best location would have been to the west of Chamdo. But politically it was not sound as the then Tibetan Governor General of the area put it, "We cannot leave Chamdo yet. If we did we should lose support of all the Khambas, in both Tibet and

Silang. We should be leaving their largest monastery to the mercy of the godless Chinese, and they would feel they have been betrayed." In similar circumstances the Assamese felt betrayed by Nehru in 1962. A leader of Tibet behaved in a more dignified manner than our greatest statesman of the world.

The Chinese were moving cautiously and gauging the world opinion. By the middle of 1950, Dengko, on north of Chamdo was captured by them. Very soon it was recaptured by the Tibetans and all the Chinese there were killed. Ford was in the employ of the Tibetan Government and was in Chamdo. He would contact Lhasa daily on the wireless. On the night of October 11-12 Chamdo received news that the Chinese had captured the frontier post Gangto Druga on the west of river Upper Yangtse, which was the border between China and Tibet. It was five days journey on foot from Gangto Druga to Chamdo. India must have got news of the conflict on the day on which Lhasa got the news.

The broadcast from Delhi denied the rumours of war quoting the Tibetan delegation. Slowly and slowly the Tibetans were losing ground but the local Khambas were not leaving. They were planning for guerilla warfare. Had outside help reached them, they were capable of giving tough fight to the Chinese. Nehru had played his role in preventing them from getting the arms. The American Ambassador, Mr. Henderson, met him on 2 Nov. 1950 and offered help in the matter of Tibet..... "He referred to the Indo-Tibetan frontier in the event of Communist China coming right up there. I told him that I was not scared in any way from a military point of view." wrote Nehru.³⁸ His note of 3rd Nov. 1950 reads, ".....The ambassador (Mr. Henderson) referred to Tibet....He asked me if the U.S. could help in any way. I told him that apart from the impracticality of such a proposal, I thought that any attempt by the United States to help would be very harmful."³⁹

As the Chinese advanced, Ford along with Tibetan armed forces decided to leave Chamdo. A local Khamba leader came to say goodbye, "Go now, and tell the world that we are fighting. You are the only one who knows. Tell them we are not Chinese but an independent nation, and we want to remain independent and free. Am I asking you to tell more than the truth.....so long as we remember that they came by force, our will to be free will survive."⁴⁰

On 19th October the retreating party was forced to surrender to the Chinese troops. Ford was one of the persons arrested. He had remained behind on the request of the Tibetan Government, to keep the government informed about the events at Chamdo. According to the Chinese some four thousand men and officials were taken prisoners or killed by the People's Army.⁴¹

On 16th October 1950 Nehru was denying what had actually happened. He said, "A press report has mentioned the invasion of Tibet by the Chinese forces. I confess we were rather worried about it. We enquired from both the Chinese and Tibetan sides. Both replied that nothing had happened. In fact, there was some very minor border incident some months ago which has now apparently been told to a newspaperman who has reported it as if a big thing has happened recently."⁴² He spoke a lie because the Tibetan issue was at the U.N. and India was claiming that the matter would be settled peacefully. China had attacked Tibet in six places on 7th Oct.⁴³ Later, on 15th Nov. 1950 the PM stated in Parliament that the Chinese had crossed into Tibet on 7 October 1950.⁴⁴ Nehru was making all efforts to assure the world of China's peaceful intentions.

But the Tibetans were not so optimistic. They had not forgotten the bitter experience of the Chinese atrocities inflicted on them in the year 1910. In that hour of peril as in case of all important decisions the state oracle was consulted. "In a state of trance he fell down in front of the Dalai Lama and said, 'Make him king!' On an auspicious day by the end of Nov. 1950, the Dalai Lama was enthroned."⁴⁵ To prevent his capture by the Chinese in case they reached Lhasa it was decided that he should leave Lhasa. The Dalai Lama left Lhasa on December 17, 1950 to shift to Yatung in the Chumbi valley in southern Tibet near the border with Sikkim.

The stayed there for some time and operated from there till the situation became clear. The Chinese were moving cautiously and in the beginning were careful not to antagonize the Tibetans. Dalai Lama leaving Lhasa was a serious matter and they had to do their best to get him back to Lhasa.

Tibetan mission to India

As the Tibetan government had to abandon its plans to send five missions, it sent a single seven member mission to India in April 1950. If any conflict took place anywhere in the world Nehru would be the first to jump into the fray. When China declared itself a Communist state, Nehru wanted India to be the first country in the world to recognize it. But he showed no such hurry in the case of Tibet. The Tibetan delegation could meet him only after five months of arrival in India on 8th September. The issue of Tibet was of very great importance to India but Nehru hoped that the whole issue would evaporate in thin air. As per Panikkar, Nehru generally agreed with his view that, "special political interests in Tibet which India had inherited from the British could not be maintained."⁴⁶

The Tibetan delegation also pleaded with the PM that Tibet as a buffer state was in India's interest.⁴⁷ Nehru was ready to forgo all the advantage that India had in Tibet. It was not that he did not know it. His problem was that he was not capable of facing the Chinese. Had he been a bold statesman the delegation would have been discussing ways of meeting the Chinese challenge. But as he had already washed his hands off the matter of Tibet, the delegation was forced to decide how best they could negotiate with the Chinese and where.

The British were very clear in their mind that it was in the best interest of India to keep China away from Indian borders. To do so they had decided to keep Tibet as a buffer state between India and China. That was achieved by the British by following a bold and shrewd foreign policy. That position was being challenged by the Chinese Government. If Nehru was a great statesman here was an opportunity for him to show his greatness by facing the Chinese threat. Instead of that he tried to make out as if the British policy was the cause of all the difficulties India was now facing with China and as if by abandoning that policy all would end well.

The Chinese were demanding that the delegation go to Peking. Nehru was ready to give unsolicited help to the Chinese. If the Chinese wanted sovereignty over Tibet, he would do his best to achieve this for the Chinese. If the Chinese wanted the Tibetan delegation to proceed to Peking, he would manipulate to send the delegation to Peking.

The record of conversation between Nehru and the Tibetan delegation says, “.... On the question of the venue of the talks, there was a long discussion. Mr. Shakabpa (leader of the Tibetan delegation) said that they were afraid that, if they went to Peking, they would not have much freedom to negotiate and that the talks would be one-side affair. They had, therefore no desire to go to Peking.....The Prime Minister told them that although India was perfectly agreeable to Delhi being the venue, it was not for him to suggest this to the Chinese

“The Prime Minister explained that the Tibetans were perfectly free to insist on talks being held in Delhi but if, as was likely, the Chinese did not agree, their would be no talks and the chance of a peaceful settlement of the Tibetan problem would disappear.....it was for the Tibetans to make their choice between war and a peaceful settlement but in doing so they should clearly understand the consequences of their choice....The Prime Minister also advised the delegation that, wherever the talks might be held, it would not be much use talking to the Chinese in terms of complete independence; talks could proceed only on the basis of Tibetan autonomy under the suzerainty of China.”⁴⁸

Unfortunately, the Tibetans were destined to listen to the advice of Nehru and nobody else. There was no body else to whom they could turn in this hour of crisis It was clear to the delegation that Tibet could expect no help from India. Left with no other choice, the helpless delegation was forced to proceed to China on Oct25, 1950. In answer to a question in parliament, Nehru said, “I believe that the Chinese ambassador has advised the Tibetan delegation to carry on further negotiations in Peking.”⁴⁹

Tibet at UN

Tibet wanted India to sponsor its case at the U.N. but India refused to do so. Earlier Nehru had boasted, “But a large number of smaller nations which today are rather helpless will probably look to India more than to other countries.”⁵⁰ This was hardly a time for rhetorics. So Tibet was left to fend for itself. On Nov.7,

1950, a Tibetan delegation staying at Kalimpong sent a telegram to the United Nations asking for protection against the armed invasion of Tibet by China. On 11th Nov. Nehru wrote to V.K. Krishna Menon, "In case such appeal came (Tibetan Government's appeal at U.N.) we would not sponsor it but we would generally support it...."⁵¹ But when El Salvador presented a resolution on 18th Nov. he sent a cable to B.N.Rau on 20th Nov.1950: "Draft resolution of El Salvador completely ignores realities of situation and overlooks facts. That only result of passing such a resolution will be to precipitate conquest of Tibet and destruction of Tibetan independence and perhaps even autonomy. We cannot possibly support it....."⁵²

India saw to it that Tibet's case was not taken up. Earlier, when China had recommended for Libya's independence, Nehru wrote to Indian ambassador in U.K., "*You should certainly support China's recommendation for independence of Libya. Our delegation must always stand for independence of all dependent and colonial areas without exception and any proposal to that end should be supported.*"⁵³ In the matter of Tibet Indian representative argued that the matter could be settled peacefully between China and Tibet and Tibet's autonomy would be safeguarded. "The Indian assertion was an outright lie."⁵⁴

"In a note to China three months ago India had already accepted China's sovereignty over Tibet."⁵⁵ Thus India used falsehood to prevent discussion on the aggression in Tibet. Where was the question of peace when conflict was already going on? Pannikar had also informed the PM that China would not accept anything short of full Chinese sovereignty over Tibet.⁵⁶ In the words of Frank Moraes, "*Unfortunately, India's attitude when the Tibetan appeal came up before the U.N. in November, 1950, was equivocal and, in the context of the facts, inexcusable.*"⁵⁷

Nehru would criticize America every now and then. But no fault could be found with American stand at the U.N. Her representative made it clear that their country agreed to the proposal of India only because India was an interested party with border with Tibet and because India had told the U.N. that the dispute would be peacefully and honourably settled. "In accordance with its traditional policy, the United States would in usual circumstances have voted for the inclusion of the item in the General Assembly

agenda.....However, in the present case, the United States delegation wanted to support the proposal made by the member states most directly concerned in the subject matter”⁵⁸

The PM had become the self appointed guardian of the interests of Tibet. But his designs were nefarious. First he brought in suzerainty with an assurance of Tibet’s autonomy. Simultaneously India accepted Chinese sovereignty over Tibet in correspondence with it. War had taken place between Tibet and China. Nehru tried his best to prove that it was a rumour. Tibetan delegation was forced to go to China but the PM said that the delegation was going on its own. He did not take Tibet’s case to U.N. When El Salvadore did so, he saw to it that the U.N. did not take up the matter. He did not allow America to help Tibet.

Twelve years before, a similar situation had developed in Czechoslovakia. At that time Nehru projected himself as the champion of its just cause. But not in the matter of Tibet! As Frank Moraes puts it, “Like Czechoslovakia twelve years before, Tibet was sold down the river. The irony lay in Nehru’s contrasting attitudes to these two tragedies. In 1938 he had visited Czechoslovakia while in Europe—and had watched with growing irritation and dismay the devious strategy of Lord Runciman, who was endeavoring simultaneously to soften up the Nazi Henlein and, as Nehru put it, ‘to break the back of the Czechs.’ He had listened to the League of Nations as it debated on Czechoslovakia and was contemptuous of the entire proceedings. Did these thoughts recur to him when the Indian delegate, on New Delhi’s instructions, assumed the same equivocal posture in the United Nations debate on Tibet?”⁵⁹ Dalai Lama sadly recalled, “Our friends would not even help us to present our plea for justice. We felt abandoned to the hordes of the Chinese army.”⁶⁰

Earlier Nehru had said at a press conference in Delhi on 7 July 1950, “The whole basis of the United Nations is supposed to be to bring about a settlement of international disputes by peaceful means. If aggression takes place and the aggressor ignores completely the United Nations, then only two choices are left: either the United Nations condemns that aggression and tries to put an end to it, or it should come to the conclusion that it has ceased to be an effective instrument of peace.”⁶¹ In the matter of Tibet he

forgot all such high sounding ideals.

In the U.N., UK, Australia and United States governments supported the proposal of India. These governments went with India because India was an interested party in the matter. In her book 'Tears of blood' Mary Craig wonders whether UK did not support the case of Tibet because it still preferred China to Russia. But that seems to be unlikely. A more plausible explanation will be that as Nehru had made it his habit to challenge and criticize the West every now and then, the West now scornfully watched him and did not get involved in the matter. A few examples of what Nehru said would suffice.

"Therefore, let us not be frightened too much of the military might of this or that group. I am not frightened and I want to tell the world on behalf of this country that we are not frightened of the military might of this power or that."⁶²

"....Because these huge and great powers did not like the idea of half a dozen little countries just telling them to do this or that!"⁶³

"India even today counts in world affairs.....But because we count, and because we are going to count more and more in the future."⁶⁴

"When man's liberty or peace is in danger we cannot and shall not be neutral; neutrality would be a betrayal of what we have fought for and stand for."⁶⁵

We consider it a great achievement that Nehru could challenge America. On the basis of such hollow rhetorics, the guardians of his reputation leave no opportunity to keep reminding this country how great he was. "His courage and outspoken resistance to United States policy and his achievement in holding togetherensured for him a commanding stature in world politics."⁶⁶

"The phase of the Korean crisis when all sides turned to Nehru and sought the support of his influence, when, as Nehru proudly phrased it, 'the world looks upon us as representing the centre of Asian feeling'⁶⁷ As soon as the issue of Tibet was dropped at the U.N., the Chinese forces started its march on Tibet. The unwise practice of criticizing the West didn't bring any good results for India. At the same time his all out efforts to befriend China also failed.

Letter of Sardar Patel

It was apparent that Nehru was moving in wrong direction and his moves were most detrimental to Tibetan and Indian interest. Sardar Patel was one man who could not have remained silent regarding Nehru's policies and their consequences. He was also the man who could confront Nehru on equal terms. Realizing the gravity of the situation he wrote a long letter to him on 7th Nov.1950: I have carefully gone through the correspondence between the External Affairs Ministry and our ambassador in Peking and through him the Chinese Government. The Chinese Government have tried to delude us by professions of peaceful intentions.....There is 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 judgment, 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 influence. It is impossible to imagine any sensible person believing in the so called threat to China from Anglo-American machinations in Tibet. 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. This feeling, if genuinely entertained by the Chinese in spite of your direct approaches to them, indicates that even though we regard ourselves as friends of China the Chinese do not regard us as their friends.

We had a friendly Tibet which gave us no trouble.....We seem to have regarded Tibetan autonomy as extending to independent treaty relationship....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.

The undefined state of the frontier and the existence on our side of a population with affinities to Tibetans or Chinese, have all the elements of potential trouble between China and ourselves.

For the first time after centuries, India's defense has to concentrate itself on two fronts simultaneously.....In our calculation

now have to reckon (apart from Pakistan) with Communist China in the north and the northeast.⁶⁸

Vital issues had been raised in the letter that Patel wrote to Nehru. The stand Nehru had taken in respect of Tibet and China was illogical and he would have found it difficult to answer the points Patel had raised. So "Nehru did not reply to Patel's letter charging the Chinese with 'little short of perfidy' and calling for urgent preparations against 'a potential enemy.'"⁶⁹ On the contrary he sent a letter to the bureaucrats who mattered.

The idea could have been to inform them of his line of thinking, and to warn them that if they gave any heed to what Patel said then that could be at his displeasure. As Nehru's stand on the issue of Tibet was totally illogical, it was necessary for him to avoid any discussion on the issue. To Patel the Tibetan issue was so important that he went into such details. But any discussion would have brought out facts that would have created problems for Nehru.

Was China deceiving India or Nehru hiding facts from the country? "The Chinese note of 16th Nov.1950 asserted that 'on August 31 the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed the Indian Government through Ambassador Panikkar that the Chinese People's Army was going to take action soon in west Sikang.' "New Delhi did not deny this, which suggests that that at least a month before the Chinese actually launched their offensive on Tibet, New Delhi was aware of Peking's plan."⁷⁰

China had made it amply clear from the very beginning that it would do everything necessary to subjugate Tibet. No doubt it called it liberation rather than attack. But her intentions were clear. Nehru was claiming China to be India's friend; China was making no effort to create or even maintain such an impression. Patel saw no good reason for China to speak of Anglo-American designs in Tibet but Nehru was ready to speak in China's favour, "However unfounded these accusations may be I wonder whether they may not have influenced the Chinese decision to move into Tibet."⁷¹ Patel was right when he feared that India might have to forgo the rights it enjoyed in Tibet. His words were prophetic.

On 31Oct.1950 India Government had stated in the note to China that certain rights had grown out of usage and agreements..... the trade agencies in Lhasa, Gyantse and Yatung

which had been in existence for over forty years, the Government of India hoped that these would continue.⁷² Chinese reaction was quick and blunt. The Chinese Ambassador at Delhi had, on behalf of his Government, refused to recognize the legitimacy of the Indian Mission in Lhasa and the trade agencies at Yatung and Gyantse and the existence of military escorts; as this violated Chinese sovereignty in Tibet.⁷³

Patel was right when he feared about the undefined border. He was also apprehensive about military challenge from the Chinese side. But these were the issues Nehru had no wish to discuss. Earlier he managed to avoid any discussion at the U.N. Now Patel had written to him a letter. He had demanded that a meeting of the cabinet be called. That was totally out of question. Nehru never called such a meeting. This letter of Patel is referred time and again to say that Patel had warned Nehru about China. As if except this he got no advice against China.

Again and again he was warned and challenged but he succeeded in pursuing his policies. "Patel had discussed the issue with India's Foreign Secretary Girija Shankar Bajpai before writing the letter. Bajpai was also unhappy with India's handling of Tibet."⁷⁴

Patel was right when he saw no good reason to see China as a friend. India had supported causes dear to China but China did not give any indication of being friendly towards India. "Such poor relations with the United States, the result mostly of Nehru's advocacy of China's claims, did not have a counter-reward in warm relations with China."⁷⁵ Nehru did all he could to appease China, but when he advised the Chinese to proceed peacefully in Tibet, they asked him to shut up. "Chinese replied on Oct. 30, 1950, stressing that China would like to make it clear that 'Tibet is an integral part of the Chinese territory....Problem of Tibet remains a domestic problem of the People's Republic of China and no foreign interference would be tolerated.'⁷⁶ and "Even this did not jolt Jawahar Lal! Who insisted that 'friendly relations with China' had to be 'the cornerstone of our policy.'⁷⁷

Patel had not taken kindly to the role of Panikkar in the whole issue, "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 pursue 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.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 representations that he made to the Chinese Government on our behalf. 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.”

Panikkar was simply doing the bidding of Nehru. At that moment Panikkar was enjoying his hour of glory. He claimed that he was even more farsighted than Nehru in the matter of India's policy regarding Tibet. In his book he writes, “I had even before I started for Peking (i.e. in 1948), 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.”⁷⁸

Although he had given himself whole heartedly to save the world along with Nehru, and also he did whatever he could to satisfy the Chinese in the matter of Tibet, the Chinese did not deem it fit to keep him informed about the developments in Tibet. He writes, “To add to my troubles (the poor fellow was too busy with the Korean crisis to think of Tibet) by the middle of the month (October 1950), rumours of a Chinese invasion of Tibet began to circulate.....visits and representations to the foreign office brought no results.....On the 25th of October, however, the Chinese announced on the Peking Radio that the process of ‘liberating Tibet’ had begun.”⁷⁹ Panikkar could get any information only after the Chinese action was over and that too over the radio. Otherwise he felt he had very close and cordial relations with the Chinese. “At 12.30 (midnight 2-3 October 1950) I was with premier Chou En Lai at his official residenceThough the occasion was the most serious I could imagine, a midnight interview on questions affecting the peace of the world.....).”⁸⁰ Within four days of such serious attempts, unknown to Nehru and Panikkar, China attacked Tibet.

“Thus while India and her ambassador were engaged with the problem of Korea.....the Chinese quietly moved into Tibet.”⁸¹ India protested against the invasion and in the process of discussion

with the Chinese India recognized Chinese sovereignty over Tibet.⁸² “India protested against Chinese intrusion in Tibetand ended with accepting Chinese sovereignty over Tibet.”⁸³ That hardly disturbed Panikkar. His main interest was in siding with the Chinese.

The Chinese were determined to join war if North Korea was invaded. They claimed that any such invasion would be a threat to their country. U.K. assured the Chinese that they had nothing to worry about Chinese borders. India’s ambassador to China found it offending to the Chinese. “I considered that the idea of Britain assuring China of the inviolability of her boundaries was patronizing, to say the least. The Chinese, who claimed to be able to ensure the inviolability of their frontiers, would, I felt sure, consider the offer insulting as putting them in a category with the Philippines or Siam.” Panikkar was happy if the Americans had not succeeded in achieving a decisive victory. “Morale of North Koreans was highI was therefore satisfied that there was no possibility of the Americans gaining a military decision.”⁸⁴

Patel was echoing the sentiments of India’s Foreign Secretary Bajpai who wrote to Nehru, “What interest the Ambassador thinks he may be serving by showing so much solicitude for the Chinese Government’s policy of false excuses and wanton high handedness towards Tibet passes my understanding.....I feel it my duty to observe that in handling the Tibetan issue with the Chinese Government our Ambassador has allowed himself to be influenced more by the Chinese point of view, by Chinese claims, by Chinese maps and by regard for Chinese susceptibilities than by his instructions or by India’s interests.”⁸⁵

Lall comments, “Any other person would have been recalled without further ceremony, but not Panikkar.”⁸⁶ People like Panikkar have a canny sense of knowing what their masters want. Panikkar might not have been working in the best interest of the country but as he was serving Nehru well, there was no question of removing him.

As mentioned earlier, Patel ended his letter suggesting, “...we meet early and decide on such steps as we might think to be immediately necessary.”⁸⁷ No such meeting took place. “Nehru did not reply directly to Patel’s letter charging the Chinese with ‘little short of perfidy’ and calling for urgent preparations against

a 'potential enemy'⁸⁸ Nehru wrote a note and sent a copy of the same to Patel.

Note by Nehru, 18.11.50: I think it may be taken for granted that China will take possession of the whole of Tibet. There is no likelihood whatsoever 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.

I think it is extremely unlikely that we may have to face any real military invasion from the Chinese side.....it is inconceivable that China should divert its forces and its strength across the Himalayas.....Thus I rule out any major attack on India by China.

We cannot save Tibetit may be possible, however, that we might be able to help Tibet retain a large measure of her autonomy.....This can only be done on the diplomatic front.

In the event should we sponsor Tibet's appeal (in the UN).....Suppose (Tibet's appeal) comes up for discussion. What then? I would suggest that our representative should state our case as moderately as possible....⁸⁹ Nehru simply meant that Tibet was a lost cause, forget it. We can be sure that had it been left to Nehru to tackle the Korean crises he would have sent a similar note and there the matter would have ended. Nehru was a prophet of doom. "Nehru the romantic, the internationalist, prescribed a prison house peace to a spirited people, while Patel the realist sadly recorded that India had let down people who 'put faith in us.'⁹⁰ Sardar Patel died on 15thDecember 1950.

Lall also expresses similar views, "Nehru worked strenuously to activate a diplomatic fire brigade (Korean crises), and sent Chou En Lai a personal message urging patience. Carried away perhaps by his own personal influence, Nehru declared in a speech at the Congress session at Nasik, 'the world looks upon us as representing the centre of Asian feeling! Nearer home the question was whether counsels of restraint would influence China's action in Tibet'⁹¹

Rajmohan Gandhi writes about the contrast between Nehru's and Patel's views, "While Nehru strove to end the war in Korea as well as the distrust between America and Mao's China, the Sardar focused on China's moves in Tibet, one a dove trailing messages of peace in the skies of the world, the other India's watchman staring at the northern frontier."⁹²

But Nehru's options were limited. As it was beyond his capacity to save Tibet he was going to save the world. Where as so many individuals expressed the view that China was a potential enemy, it is amazing that he time and again emphasized that China would not attack India. How is it that what was so clear to so many people was not clear to Nehru?

Tibet: In Indian Parliament of 1950

Patel was not the only person to have apprehensions about Nehru's policies. The proceedings of Parliament of 1950 (the then Constituent Assembly) are very important from point of view of the reaction of the legislators to his policies. The debate also gives an idea of the status of Tibet at the time as perceived by them. On 6th Dec. 1950, Nehru as Prime Minister and Foreign Minister moved the motion on foreign policy in Parliament. As China had invaded Tibet just recently and India was going to be directly affected, Tibet should have been his main concern. Not so to Nehru. The whole world was his concern. He started thus:

"When we today talk of international affairs, the issue may be described in just one sentence or two or three words. The issue is 'peace and war'. And not war in a particular corner of the world, but an over whelming and all enveloping war." World war was one of his main themes. With amazing regularity he would invoke the danger of world war. He used the platform to demonstrate his support for China. "Situation in Far East could only be dealt with satisfactorily if the principal parties concerned were also round the conference table (justification for admission of China to U.N.)."

".....if 38th Parallel was crossed, the Chinese Government, rightly or wrongly is not the point, would consider it a grave danger to their own security and that they would not tolerate it.....I wish you to remember also that whatever happens in Korea is of utmost significance to the Chinese people. One cannot ignore that fact, unless one is prepared to ignore completely China and the Chinese people." What Korea was to China exactly the same Tibet was to

India. Not to Nehru. He saw the justification in Chinese action but couldn't act to save India's interest in Tibet. He could see the danger to China if 38 Parallel was crossed: but could not see the danger to India if the Chinese forces entered Tibet. How is it that what was so clear to so many speakers was not clear to him? Tibet was left at the mercy of China, "we told them (the Chinese) that we earnestly hoped that this matter would be settled peacefully by China and TibetWe were interested in Tibet maintaining her autonomy which she had had for the last forty or fifty years at least. We did not challenge or deny the suzerainty of China over Tibet"

Nehru declared Korean War to be the main theme of his address, "Now I come to the main theme of my address (i.e. Korean war)." While Nehru spoke in detail on the issue of world war and Korea he did not say a single word regarding the new dangerous development on India's northern border. In Korea America was helping it to remain independent but to Nehru America was an aggressor. Nearer home, China was crushing Tibet and Nehru was referring to China as '*this great country of China*'.

Most solemnly Nehru had tried to impress it upon the members that world war was near, and that he had the solution to it only if they would care to listen. For him the issue that needed immediate attention was how to save the world. In spite of Nehru's efforts the idea of saving the world had not yet caught the imagination of Indians. He was deliberately trying to avoid the question of Tibet. In this he miserably failed. Not a single member was keen to know about his imaginary world war or Korea. Their problems lay nearer home and they were concerned about Tibet. Speaker after speaker expressed concern about the new danger taking shape in Tibet.

Prof. N.G. Ranga said, ".....I am also conscious of the grave tone in which the honourable Prime Minister has introduced this subject (gravity of national and international situation).....Could he (Nehru) be indifferent to the gathering clouds of threats of insecurity to our own safety in our own country.....threats which are all around us, especially in the north and north east sides of our country and our borders."

"Now, when we talk again and again of the sovereignty of the Chinese people over the Tibetan Government or country what is it that we are doing? Are we not giving a blank cheque to be

signed on our behalf by somebody else in order to spread their own imperialist tentacles?"

Prof. Ranga asked us to keep in mind that one day Tibetans might be forced to come to India. How prophetic these words were! Tibetans were forced to flee to India in 1959. Prof. Ranga further said, "Instead of that I found, to my utter surprise our government and their spokesmen both in India as well as abroad, repeatedly professing their friendship not only to China's people, not only to the Chinese government, but to Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. This beats anybody and every body. These are days when we should be ready with the aid of United Nations and other factors to counter this menace of sovereignty of one country over another. Instead of that we go about accepting it, admitting it and apologizing to it. This is one criticism that I am obliged to make against our foreign policy. Then there is the spectre of war. We are trying to prevent it. But suppose it takes place? What is the preparation that we are making in our country?"

The way Nehru would speak about the world war was amazing. Day in and day out he would warn about the coming world war. It was a pertinent question that if world war was so near, then we had to prepare for it. But Nehru had nothing to show in this regard. A few days back Mr. Kunzru had warned about necessity of increasing our armed forces. Prof. Ranga wanted to know if any thing was being done in that regard. He warned that China would never treat us as friends, and that China was making India defeatist by calling India war -mongers. He further said:

"We are afraid of becoming satellites of the others.....But at the same time are we prepared to allow our country, in a willy-nilly fashion, to become a slave, an agent or, to be absolutely ashes under the feet of the other power? There was a Prime Minister of England who went back to his country after a shameful treaty and then warned his people against war. He brought back along with his umbrella, peace for the people. A few months thereafter there was war."

Mr. Ranga was referring to the treaty England had with Hitler. It was a clear warning that the shameful acceptance of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet would not prevent war with China.

Dr. S.P. Mukherjee said, "We must also guard against the possibility of trying to please every one. That is a dangerous pastime

and very often we are reminded of the fate that overtook the old traveler who was no doubt guided by moral principles—who tried to cross over a rickety bridge with his son and donkey.....In this case if we try to follow the same policy, we may or may not lose any donkey, but we may lose our country.”

“We have no quarrel with China, so long as China is anxious for the liberation of her own people. Every one will have sympathy with the Chinese people but if China takes upon herself the task of liberating other peoples also who may not be anxious to obtain liberation at her hands.....When India asked China not to proceed on the path of violence in the matter of Tibet, the reply that China has sent has shocked, surprised and given sorrow to the government of India. I do not know whether it has made any difference with regard to China’s settled policy in respect of Tibet, but here again, what is the definite policy of the government of India with regard to Tibet? The Prime Minister just glossed over it. He said, ‘We have sent another request asking them to be peaceful.’ But has that made any difference? Just as in the case of Korea, each country for which this so called liberation starts is the worst sufferer. It is like the old story of the operation being successful and the patient succumbing.”

It is clear that Mookherjee was not at all impressed by the deeds of Nehru and it was clear to him that his actions could only do harm to the interests of Tibet. It was shrewd of him to be able to notice that trait of Nehru by which he would limit himself to writing letters month after month and year after year. Nine years later we would get one of the most pitiable answers from Nehru in Parliament regarding letter writing. Dr. S.P. Mookerjee said that Chinese action could not only affect Tibet but also the security of India, “It is a fact that the boundary between India and Tibet is yet to be definitely defined.....China will do everything necessary to claim Indian territory as per its maps.” How prophetic these words proved to be! He also took note of the shock and surprise which the government experienced. That was another malady with which the government was destined to be afflicted for years.

Dr. Mookherjee further said, “Suppose the Himalayas, which were considered to be impregnable, that huge border covering 2000 miles for which no separate precaution or defence was thought to be necessary but which has suddenly become an important

frontier, happen to be the line through which there is penetration or infiltration into India. How is India going to defend itself?" This is exactly what happened later. He further said, "Reduction in defense expenditure means a weakening of the military position of India. I say, that the Government of India will be doing the greatest possible disservice to India as a whole." Twelve years later though Dr. Mookherjee was not alive, he was proved fully right when a weak India was badly defeated in the 1962 war. After the war it was decided to immediately raise the strength of the army.

When Dr. Mookherjee had referred to the weakening of the military position he had in mind the address of the President of India to the Indian Parliament on 31.1.50, "While the security of the country must remain the paramount obligation of the Government, they are anxious to reduce expenditure on defense, in so far as this is possible, and they propose to do so as a measure of economy as well as a gesture of peace."

In response to this Mr. Chaliha had said, "Best security in the world is best preparedness and the best army." But such sane advice had hardly any use for Nehru. A few months later even the American ambassador to India felt the need to give similar advice to Nehru, "Soviet Union is an expansionist and aggressive force.....the only way to check it was to make it realize that there was sufficient strength to do so.....If the United States, etc., were weak and not capable of stopping Soviet expansion, then the latter would continue (to spread out) and ultimately lead to war. The United States did not want war. But they felt that the only way to check war was to be strong enough to make the other party realize that any aggression meant war. This would effectively stop war."

Nehru was always speaking about the coming world war. The American ambassador had to give him a sermon on how to avoid war. Also the American ambassador could see that Nehru's policy regarding Tibet was capable of leading to war and the best way to avoid it was to prepare for war. The ambassador was correct. When China saw that India was weak, it went on expanding into territory of India and Nehru had no courage and capability to stop it. So, proper advice was not lacking at any time. Unfortunately, the capacity to take up the challenge was missing.

Coming back to the Parliamentary debate, Acharya Kripalani

found no justification to advocate the entry of China to U.N.O. He further said, "We were considered, or may I say that we considered ourselves, as the leader of Asia." He was ridiculing the fad or claim of Nehru to be the leader of Asia. As a very serious situation had developed in Tibet and as Nehru was pinned down for his wrong policies he knew that it was hardly a time for hollow rhetorics. He immediately said no to what Acharya Kripalani had said.

Acharya Kripalani continued, "And Asiatic people looked for inspiration and guidance or at least we thought they looked to us for inspiration and guidance. I am afraid this position holds good no more." He was sarcastically reminding Nehru how he had always projected himself to be the champion of the cause of small nations and how he was exposed by abandoning a helpless Tibet to the '*hordes of ruthless Chinese.*' The PM had said in the year 1949, "In regard to any major problem of a country or a group of countries of Asia, India has to be considered.....Whatever her actual strength may or may not be, India is potentially a very powerful country and possesses the qualities and factors that go a long way to make a country grow strong, healthy, and prosperous."⁹³

Mr. Masani said, "The issue stated by the Prime Minister was peace or war. May I suggest that there is also the other issue of peace or appeasement leading to war!as I listened to the Prime Ministers' speech, I wondered whether he was heading for what might be called a '*peace at any price.*' I was relieved; therefore, when he came out with a positive statementwhen, he assured the house that we shall not tolerate anyone crossing the Himalayas." Later events proved that Nehru was incapable of facing the Chinese challenge and his assurance of defending the borders was false, irresponsible and for the purpose of misleading the house.

Mr. Masani further said, "Once before, this had all been gone through when a British Prime Minister told a cheering House of Commons that at the cost and sacrifice of a '*distant country,*' Czechoslovakia, he had brought back '*peace in his time.*' At that time, our present Prime Minister was among that brave band of people who refused to be a party to that appeasement and who warned the world that this was no way to peace, that appeasement of aggression would lead to further aggression, and sure enough within a year the great war came."

Apparently, he was telling Nehru that Tibet was being used as a sacrificial goat but that it will not prevent confrontation with China. How true this has been proved with the passage of time. Whatever was said was correct. The tragedy was that Nehru had no ability to take up the Chinese challenge.

Masani supported American action in Korea. Any deal with the Chinese would have meant the repetition of Czechoslovakia. He spoke about collective security. He was of the opinion that America and its allies were facing difficulties in Korea because they had decreased the production of armament. He wanted India to take up the case of Tibet in U.N.

In the actions of China he saw its aggressive character. Masani said, "When the Communist Party of India was engaged in trying to overthrow our government by force, China sent a message of greetings and good wishes to the communists here '*for the liberation*' of India. This is how China was reciprocating our friendship..... When the Prime Minister was trying to persuade the Tibetan leaders to accommodate the Chinese claims to suzerainty, a statement of New China News Agency said, '*Anglo American imperialists and their running dog, Pundit Nehru, were plotting a coup in Lhasa for the annexation of Tibet.*'.....there can be no longer any illusions about friendship, about cordiality and about comradeship in Asia."

Nehru had been harping on the security provided by high Himalayas. He had said, "There has sometimes been reference in the press to the consequences on our own frontiers of China's occupation of Tibet. From a military point of view, this has no great consequence and involves no particular danger to India. Tibet is a very difficult country with an average altitude of 12,000 feet and there is the great Himalayan barrier. It is an exceedingly difficult matter for any considerable body of men to cross into India over that barrier."⁹⁴

Masani said, ".....and military experts assure us that not only can aircraft fly over the Himalayas and come and bomb our cities in North India with safety, but also that even mechanized armies can go through the Himalayan passes and come into our countrylet us guard our frontiers ideologically and militarily to the last of our abilities." Masani's warnings were proved right in the 1962 war with China. For years Nehru did almost nothing to protect

the border with China and at the same time went on assuring the country that all was well. This was highest degree of irresponsibility on his part.

Rev. D'souza said, "It is incumbent upon us to increase our strength, to consolidate it in every way."

Shri Madava Rau said, "Can we treat Red China as a government which is disposed in a friendly manner towards us? Only this one instance would suffice to show what their attitude is. They are attempting now not only to interfere in Korea but have launched a campaign for the so called liberation of Tibet."

Each and every member, who spoke on 6th Dec. 1950, spoke of the Chinese danger. Most spoke in favour of Tibet. No member was interested in the matter of Korea. The PM had miserably failed in his sinister design to divert the attention of the members from the serious issue of Tibet. The debate continued the next day. The mood of the members was the same.

M.A. Ayyangar said, "As far as our defenses are concerned we ought not to bite; but we at least must hiss some times. If we do not hiss even, we will be trodden.....as against 450 million of Chinese, if we with 350 million had armed ourselves and were ready for an offensive if necessary, China would not have ventured on Tibet. So far as our defenses are concerned, we are not making all the efforts necessary....possibly the will is lacking."

Mr. Ayyangar was referring to total lack of effort on part of the PM to save Tibet that he rightly felt gave additional reason to China to invade Tibet.

Pandit Kunzru said, "U.N. forces should not cross the 38th parallelChina, which claims to have interest in North Korea, denied that India had any interest in TibetConduct of China in regard to Tibet can hardly be regarded as friendly to India. Indeed, it is a warning to us and we should take steps immediately to strengthen our own position so that we may support all those whose security depends on us.....we cannot wait ...till we are overtaken by a crisis."

How prophetic these words were! Unfortunately Nehru was going to wait till we were overtaken by a crisis. Pandit Kunzru was concerned about the government's proposal to reduce the strength of the army. Nehru waited for the crisis and after the 1962 war India decided to increase its armed forces.

P.Y. Deshpande spoke about strengthening the armed forces to face the menace of communism. Naziruddin Ahmad said, "It is not what we wish or what we think that matters in a dynamic world, but it is the real effect that our action produces that really matters....China's invasion on Tibet is clearly an imperialistic expansionist move.....It means, if anything, at least, danger to our frontier."

"We merely objected to the invasion (in Tibet). But how did they respond?While we were supporting them in U.N.O. what has been our reaction to this rebuff? We adhere to them all the more! We say the Korean War cannot be solved except with the concurrence of China, and that China must be admitted to the U.N.O. Tibet has been invadedThis uncertain boundary line between Tibet and India will be another excuse for intervention." This is exactly what happened later on.

He further said, "But even with all that (civil war and war with Japan, inflation and food scarcity), they have been able to so husband their resources and improve their military powers that they are in a position not only to face, but to face bravely the mighty power of the U.S.A.....I therefore submit that the very first requirement is that we must strengthen our military positionMy own opinion is that if we try to avoid difficulty (sacrifice by people) at this time we may have to face a much more difficult situation in the future.....it may be a more bitter war a few years later. With our best efforts we may be able to ward off war only for a time as did Chamberlain." How prophetic these words were! He also told that India recognized communist regime in China immediately. But in 1914 Britain was not ready to recognize the Republican government of China unless it signed the 1914 agreement.

Frank Anthony said, "India violently supported her admission into the U.N.O. In fact, she did it so violently as to antagonize some of her friends in the democratic countries.....But what excuse—unless it be an utterly unworthy and dishonest excuse—can anyone assign for the cynical, unprovoked attack on Tibet?....I do not think that this point has been sufficiently emphasized (that Chinese suzerainty over Tibet is conditional on full Tibetan autonomy).....Tibet constitutes a vast natural airfield— and hostile planes operating from Tibet would only have to cover

a distance of 300 miles in order to bomb and destroy Delhi.”

A Hon. Member: We are not afraid of it.

Frank Anthony replied, “You may not be afraid of it, but I want to know how you want to resist it?.....By being neutral India will excite the greed and inquisitiveness of the aggressor and the expansionist. And today, Sir, who in this House will deny that the mantle of imperialism, the mantle of territorial expansion, the mantle of ruthless colonization has been assumed completely by communism.....our frontiers should be strong and as has been pointed out by several speakers, strength today is commensurate with our armed strength....”

S.N. Mishra and Joachim Alva were the rare exceptions who spoke in favour of Nehru. Shri Gautan said, “Tibet was a free country. We also needed a buffer state between India and China. For that reason also any claim of China on Tibet should not be accepted.”

The views expressed by members made certain facts very clear. Tibet was a free country that was being occupied by China forcibly. Nehru’s inactivity was deeply regretted. His acceptance of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet was totally unjustified in the view of the members. China was clearly seen as a threat to India’s borders. The need to strengthen the armed forces was felt by one and all. Nobody saw a friend in China. Korean War was going on for more than five months. Nobody saw the making of world war in it. Nobody saw any role for Nehru in it.

When Nehru should have been informing the country of the new dangers on India’s borders and how best he proposed to face the challenge he tried to mislead the country. He pretended as if Tibet did not exist. As if Korea was the biggest problem of India. He tried his best to divert the attention of the house to the imaginary world war. He miserably failed in this. He had no inclination to learn anything from the members. His weakness should have been clear to everybody and in the best interest of the country he should have been removed. But that was not to be. His capacity to survive was phenomenal. The country was going to pay heavy price for it.

Replying to the members Nehru said, “Some honourable members are full of light—they have no need to grope. They know exactly what should be done at any moment. I envy them for this feeling of brightness and lightness. Mr. M.R. Masani said in the

course of his speech that it would be a great tragedy if Mr. Truman and Mr. Attlee decided to appease China. It is a pity; Mr. Masani is not in the White House at Washington to advise them.

Most people seem to imagine that defence consists merely in large numbers of people marching up and down with guns.....you cannot go beyond the capacity (resources).....There is one thing which can go up, and that is your morale, and that is your determination not to surrender, what ever the danger. If that is present then nothing can conquer you.

In other words the real development and strength of an army and a country lies in developing the industrial resources and the economy of the county, out of which armies and defence forces and everything come...How will you fight, I ask you, with the best army in the world if you cannot feed your army, if you cannot feed your people?...Hungry army cannot fight.....if there is a little lack of sugar, there is shouting all over the country, because there is not enough sugar. And then you talk to me about defence.

.....nothing will protect you, because there is an inner strength which you lackAnd do you think that if any danger or peril comes to this country, we are going to weaken or surrender or bend down before it? Even if we do not have a single gun, we will fight and fight to the death..... He is last year's person (a person who talks of one or two blocks) and that he is not keeping pace with the changing world and changing events. Suppose you were responsible in Korea. What will you do—deliver a speech, telling them what you like and dislike, and which block you belong to? That will not help the situation in the slightest....the practical person, the realist, looks at the tip of his nose, and does not see much further: the result is that he is all the time stumblingand the astonishing thing is that failure comes again and again and no lesson is learnt from that failure and the identical policy is pursued yet again. Idealism is realism of tomorrow. It is the capacity to think in a slightly longer term ——to think what is good for the day after tomorrow, or for the next year.

It is perfectly true that we have admitted repeatedly this Chinese suzerainty over Tibet; just as we have laid stress on Tibet's autonomy. But, apart form this historical or legal or constitutional argument, or even the argument that Mr. Gautam raised about buffer states and the like, which, if I may say so is not much of an

argument, ——it may be his desire or my desire, but it is not an argument—the real point to be laid is that it is not right for any country (China) to talk about it's suzerainty over any area outside its own immediate range...I proclaim the last voice in regard to Tibet should be the voice of the people of Tibet and nobody else."

Thus Nehru ended his speech. Going by the dictum 'attack is the best form of defense' he attacked all those who had found fault with him. With the help of heavy doses of worthless rhetorics he made out a case that those who were afraid of China were cowards with no moral strength. He talked of inner strength; but time and again failed to show any signs of it when the need arose. He ridiculed those whose words later proved to be prophetic. He asked others to rise above mere talk but him self could not do so. He was surprised that people commit the same mistakes again and again. But he was one of them.

When cornered on the subject of Tibet he declared that the people of Tibet should decide their fate. It was a shrewd move to stop the members from speaking about Tibet. Because the Tibetans alone would decide their fate: who were we to speak? But all along he had worked against their interests. He had repeatedly argued that if India had recognized Chinese suzerainty over Tibet then India also stood by Tibet's autonomy.

But whereas the talk of suzerainty had given legitimacy to China's aggression on Tibet in the eyes of the world, Nehru had absolutely no power to maintain the autonomy of Tibet. If the members were worried about the intentions of China he created an impression as if he was bold and capable of handling the situation. Today we know that he was a big failure.

What impression did the Chinese get from the policies of Nehru? India had long standing political interests in Tibet. China challenged these interests. Without firing a single shot India surrendered these rights. Instead of challenging China, India claimed it to be her friend. When the whole Indian assembly saw a threat to India in the actions of China; Nehru justified his actions as well of China. The strange behaviour of Nehru did not endear Nehru to China. It clearly saw a weak Nehru and took full advantage of his weakness. It accepted the McMahon Line in Burma and did not dispute its boundary with Nepal, Bhutan and Pakistan. It

disputed its boundary only with India. China thought it fit to infiltrate into Indian territory alone. It grabbed thousands of square miles of Indian land and laid claim to further thousands of miles. That was bound to happen as Nehru was allowed to continue as the Prime Minister.

Nehru Korea/China and Tibet

North Korea invaded South Korea in June 1950. America saw it as an attack on democracy and suppression of a small country by communist forces. If the communists were allowed such attack in Korea then the menace of such attacks would have increased. At that hour of crisis America came to the rescue of South Korea. America sent its troops to South Korea and fought for its independence. When America was in the process of meeting the communist challenge Nehru saw in it the making of world war. Sitting pretty safe, far away from the scene of action, Nehru shouted himself hoarse to save the coming world war.

It was not the world but Korea which was to be saved. Nearer home it was Tibet that was crying for help. Nehru was incapable of saving Tibet. The Korean crisis was a god sent opportunity for Nehru to keep himself afloat. He would save Korea where only rhetorics were needed and dump Tibet where some real fight was definitely to be expected. He wholeheartedly involved himself into the Korean conflict as a peacemaker. He shrewdly drowned the issue of Tibet in his mission to save the world. The striking contrast between his policies regarding Korea and Tibet expose his hollowness completely.

1. In the matter of Korea he roared like a lion. In the matter of Tibet he advocated silence. "Nehru's justification for silence on Tibet was the time honoured one. Condemnation of the aggression; '*might well bring greater trouble*' to the victim."⁹⁵
2. In the matter of Korea he could clearly see the world war that never came. In the matter of Tibet he refused to see war with China as a distinct possibility that finally did come. Nehru

wrote on 11th August 1950, "There has not been in India any direct fear of China as a country.....I don't think China had designs on any country, leaving apart Formosa and Tibet."⁹⁶

3. In the matter of Korea he was one of the most prominent statesmen of the world destined to guide all the important countries of the world. He was in seventh heaven. "The world looks upon us as representing the centre of Asian feeling."⁹⁷ In the matter of Tibet he was an innocent soul who was cheated by China continuously right up to the 1962 war.

4. In the matter of Korea or in his dealing with America he was a hard nut to crack. D. Acheson said, "He (Nehru) was one of the most difficult men with whom I have ever had to deal."⁹⁸ Nehru wrote, "They (Americans) expected something more than gratitude and goodwill and that more I could not supply them."⁹⁹ In the matter of China he again and again went out of his way in its support and got nothing in return. He didn't mind being abused by them.

5. Korea was of vital interest to Nehru. Tibet was not. In an interview on 23rd Aug. 1950, he was asked, "Why does India regard the settlement of the Korean dispute vital to her interest?"

Nehru: India is vitally interested because the peace of Asia is involved.

Question: Does India view with alarm the communist efforts to control Tibet? If, so, why?

Nehru: India has no political or territorial designs in Tibet..¹⁰⁰

Nehru evaded the question. He behaved as if Korea was an issue of life and death for him. In the matter of Tibet Nehru had made it clear to the Tibetan delegation that they could not expect much of him.¹⁰¹ Korea was of vital interest because peace of Asia was involved. But he was not interested in Tibet where India's peace was involved. "Unwilling to look at China's activities in Tibet or at the danger to the rights that India had enjoyed there."¹⁰²

6. In the matter of Korea Nehru knew what the role of U.N. was. "The whole basis of the United Nations is supposed to

be to bring about a settlement of international disputes by peaceful means. If aggression takes place and the aggressor ignores completely the United Nations, then only two choices are left; either the United Nations condemns that aggression and tries to put an end to it, or it should come to the conclusion that it has ceased to be an effective instrument of peace.”¹⁰³ In the matter of Tibet Nehru forgot the United Nations. He saw to it that the issue was not even taken up for discussion. Any discussion would bring more trouble for Tibet; he felt.

7. In the matter of Korea he passionately wrote to N. Raghavan (Panikkar's successor to Peking), “I speak these words (regarding settlement in Korea) not only with anxious hope but with a prayer in my heart that we of this generation might prove worthy of our inheritance, of the passionate hopes and aspirations of the innumerable people who hunger for peace.”¹⁰⁴ But his Chinese friends differed. “Peking radio spoke sarcastically of India posing as the view of Asia.”¹⁰⁵

Nehru had no such compunction in the matter of Tibet. He played his own illogical role whereby the hopes and aspirations of millions of Tibetans remain crushed even to this day. We can hardly be proud of his role in Tibet. India's Deputy PM at that time; Sardar Patel wrote to Nehru, “the tragedy of it is that the Tibetans put faith in us; they chose to be guided by us; we have been unable to get them out of the meshes of Chinese diplomacy or Chinese influence.” Jaiprakash Narayan said, “It is true that we could not have prevented the Chinese from annexing Tibet. But we could have saved ourselves from being party to a wrong.”¹⁰⁶ Independent India's first President Dr. Rajendra Prasad felt that India needed to undertake penance for its misdeeds in the matter of Tibet.

8. A special session of Parliament was held on 31st July 1950, to discuss the situation in Korea. Regarding Korea Nehru was writing to all the concerned parties. To Atlee C.R. he wrote on 10th, 14th, 16th, 20th and 21st July 1950. The letter of 21st said, “To a small extent, we in India are in somewhat better position to judge of these forces. We are more directly and closely affected by them and so we have given a great deal of

thought to them.”¹⁰⁷ How one would have wished Nehru to write exactly the same regarding Tibet instead! In the matter of Tibet he avoided the issue even in regular Parliament.

His Korea and Tibet policies should be dealt together to get a correct perspective. His so called greatness in Korea loses its shine when his action or inaction in Tibet is taken into account. His policies did irreparable damage to the interests of the Tibetans. It was clear that he was not capable of meeting the Chinese challenge in Tibet and India.

The real worth of Nehru's role was succinctly evaluated by New York Times dated 12th Oct.1950:

“Pundit Nehru purports to speak for Asia, but it is a voice of abnegation, his criticism now turns out to have been obstructive, his policy is appeasement, worst of all, one fails to find a valid moral judgment in his attitude. One can feel certain that history will condemn the Nehru policy as well intentioned but timid, short-sighted and irresponsible.”¹⁰⁸ Assessment of New York Times was absolutely correct. The paper had correctly pointed out; *worst of all, one fails to find a valid moral judgment in his attitude*. His whole approach was immoral.

Such criticism turned an egoistic PM bitter. The self appointed leader of Asia wrote to Panikkar on 25th Oct.1950:

“..... after a period of an attempt at counting me as ‘the greatest leader of Asia’ those in authority in the United States....have decided to debunk me, Primarily, these attacks are due to our China and Korea policy It is sought to be made outthat I am an ambitious politician and not a statesman, and so on and so forth. A week or two before this, I was supposed to be one of the top most men of the age, a man whose goodwill was more important than any number of armies, whose influence was predominant in Asia, and so on and so forth It shows the immaturity of American judgmentI am supposed to have ‘sold out’ to Mao through your bad influence. Panikkar is referred to as ‘Panicky’. It really is amazing how great nations are governed by very small people?”¹⁰⁹ The letter only showed the petty mindedness of the PM.

New York Times was correct in its assessment of the PM. His

stand on Tibet was based on falsehood and cowardice. From a comfortable distance he flexed his muscles and took it upon himself to pass judgment regarding the policies of America but could not save his country's vital interests in Tibet. America was ready to help but he scornfully turned down the offer. To Vijayalakshmi Pandit he wrote on 1st Nov. 1950, "Henderson paid a visit to Bajpai and vaguely hinted that the state department would be glad to help, if its help was sought in this matter. No reply was needed and no reply is being given."¹¹⁰ Actually the PM was totally incapable of taking a bold stand. Henderson was the American ambassador in India at the time.

His greatness rested on his hollow rhetorics. Nobody had appointed him the leader of the third world. The newly independent nations or small nations were just trying to adjust themselves to the changed world scene after the Second World War; when Nehru by himself had started behaving as if he was the topmost leader of the third world.

Immediately after the Indo-China war of 1962 Nehru placed a big order for arms and ammunition with America. Had he done so 12 years earlier, when Henderson met him; the history would have been different. Twelve precious years had been wasted. China was dealing most arrogantly with India but Nehru was hell bent on proving his loyalty towards China. On one of his visits to London, the PM had said, "India had thought it advisable to shape her policy towards China in such a way as to make it clear that Russia was not the only possible friend to whom China could look."¹¹¹ But was China looking towards Indian friendship? After all friendship is a two sided affair.

Nehru had no peers after the death of Sardar Patel in 1950. He would rarely consult his cabinet colleagues on the matter of foreign policy. In spite of sane advice from several quarters he continued with his illogical policies. The final outcome of such lopsided policy was a foregone conclusion. He was wrong in the matter of Tibet but was convinced that he had a role to play on the world scene. Those were heady days when Nehru was mesmerized by the thought of his important role in shaping of the new world order. He was riding roughshod and nobody could stop him from the disastrous course he had taken.

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107. Selected works, vol. No. 14 (2), page 354.
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On The Way to Loosing Freedom

Abandoned to the Hordes

Tragedy struck Tibet in 1950 when China attacked it and proceeded for its so-called liberation. On its own it was not possible to meet the Chinese challenge. The whole of northern, eastern and part of western border is surrounded by China and its southern and remaining western border meets that of India, Nepal and Bhutan. Bhutan and Nepal were too small countries to be able to help it against China. Its own population was three million people. This was hardly a number capable to face the most populous country of the world.

As such only India remained. It had every good reason to come to the rescue of Tibet or at least to allow other countries, if there were any, to help. It did not let this happen. India saw to it that the U.N. did not take up the issue of Tibet. With no help available from any quarters, its fate was sealed. Dalai Lama sadly recalled, "Our friends would not even help us to present our plea for justice. We felt abandoned to the hordes of the Chinese army."¹

In the beginning of 1950, the Chinese forces were five hundred miles away from Tibetan borders in eastern Tibet. To reach the border they had to cross the Chinese province of Sikang which had Tibetan population and pass through deep gorges. India in its own interest should have supplied arms. When the British were ruling India, they had made it amply clear to the Russians and the Chinese that they had political interests in Tibet and would not allow the status quo to be altered. Free India at least could have declared that it was not in a position to supply arms and would remain neutral and would not come in the way of its procuring arms from other countries. There are good reasons to believe that America would have helped Tibet in every possible manner. Americans could not help directly without India's consent as Tibet was a land locked country and arms could reach only through India. Had it got help, it would never have been conquered by the Chinese.

The Tibetans still had a few months to prepare to face the Chinese. It would have been an altogether different situation if well armed and determined Tibetans faced the Chinese rather than helpless, confused and ill prepared ones. The fight between the Tibetans and the Chinese would have been a real fight and would have drawn the attention of the world. All this was not to happen as Nehru had neither the capacity to face the Chinese nor would he allow the Tibetans to procure help from outside. The Chinese were watching the situation and were preparing to attack a helpless Tibet. The Chinese proceeded to capture Tibet when they saw no challenge to their threat to subjugate it.

The Tibetans decided to send five goodwill missions to U.S.A., Britain, Nepal, India and China. They would have presented their case for independence and at the same time tried to get necessary aid. Then the Chinese warning came. "A warning was issued, obviously directed at India, that any country receiving one of the 'illegal' missions would be considered as 'entertaining hostile intentions against the Chinese People's Republic. None of the goodwill missions ever left Lhasa."² None but the Government of India could have prevented these missions from going ahead.

Finally only one delegation was sent to India. Heeding the Chinese warning Nehru did not meet the delegation for six months. This delegation was forced to go to Peking where it had to yield to the dictates of China. Originally the delegation was determined not to allow any interference with the independence of Tibet. "The Tibetan delegation was still in India and had refused the invitation to go to Peking. The leaders of the delegation said they would meet the Chinese on neutral ground. They also said their purpose was to negotiate a non-aggression treaty based on Chinese recognition of Tibet's independence. "I had a letter from a very reliable source in Lhasa telling me that the Government was determined not to yield."³

Nehru had refused the request from the delegation to arrange its meeting with the Chinese in Delhi. He had called suzerainty 'a legacy from the British'. But the British suzerainty had forced the Chinese to negotiate with the Tibetans on equal footing in India

from 1911 to 1913. Nehru's suzerainty forced the Tibetans to go to China. He also impressed it upon the delegation not to insist on full independence in negotiations with the Chinese. He was in a way cozying them up to the Chinese point of view.

From the beginning of 1950 the Chinese troops were advancing towards the borders of eastern and northeastern Tibet in small numbers. Nehru was at the same time doing his best to assure the world of peaceful intentions of the Chinese. After gauging the world opinion and making necessary preparations the Chinese invaded Tibet on 7th October 1950. The Tibetan government was determined to resist the Chinese with all its might, but did not announce the invasion by the Chinese troops. Strategically it was not correct for Tibet. How would the world come to know that China had invaded Tibet? "What depressed me most was that no one outside Tibet was likely to understand this. When the news came out the obvious interpretation would be that Tibet had no real will to resist."⁴

India's response was no better. Quoting the Tibetan delegation, a broadcast from Delhi denied the rumours of any Chinese attack. "But for the Tibetan delegation to deny that there had been Chinese aggression several days after the news of the invasion had reached Lhasa could only mean either that the delegation had not been informed or that it had been told to keep quiet."⁵ For India there was no need to get information from the delegation which was far away from Lhasa. India had its mission there, which must have known about the invasion.

Within a few days of their invasion the Chinese captured the eastern part of Tibet where Chamdo was the main town. Most of the Tibetan armed forces and officials were captured. They also captured Ford, an Englishman in employ of Tibetan government as a wireless operator. He was the only European in Tibet. The Chinese had been doing propaganda for months of ridding Tibet of imperialists. All they could find in the name of foreign evil forces was Ford.

When the Chinese had earlier invaded these areas in 1910, mass destruction and massacre had taken place. The Tibetans were really very much scared. But this time the Chinese were proceeding cautiously. This was just the beginning. The whole of Tibet was to be subjugated. There was no torture or murder of the Tibetans.

The captured Tibetans were told, "We bring you peace. We have come to liberate you from foreign devils. The Chinese and Tibetans are brothers. Tibetan customs and religion would be respected."⁶ The Tibetans could hardly believe that they were not tortured or killed by the Chinese.

Most of the captured soldiers had come to save their motherland from the Chinese. The Chinese did not do any harm to the captured soldiers. They were given money and were allowed to proceed to Lhasa with their wives and children. These soldiers were naturally relieved that their lives had been spared. These soldiers were to return to Lhasa and spread the message how good the Chinese were. This was part of the Chinese larger scheme of things. With the capture of Chamdo the first phase of the Chinese invasion was over. Five days after the surrender of the Tibetan forces, on 25th Oct. Radio Peking announced, "People's Army units have been ordered to advance into Tibet to free three million Tibetans from imperialist oppression and to consolidate national defenses on the western borders of China."⁷

Although Nehru had tried to make out that there was no major conflict between the Chinese and the Tibetans, the Chinese saw no reason to keep quiet. If the Chinese had achieved a major success they had good reason to declare it openly. Years later Nehru would hide the fact that the Chinese had built a road in Aksai Chin and it was the Chinese who declared the completion of the road.

In India Nehru did his bit to support Chinese actions. If they had attacked eastern Tibet; he would find reasons on his own in support of his masters. "There are certain disputed areas in eastern Tibet where China had been given the right to station garrisons under the terms of former agreements," declared Nehru.⁸ At the same time he was unhappy that his masters were not reciprocating in an equally friendly manner. "We feel India has been ill-repaid for her diplomatic friendliness towards Peking."⁹ This complaint would remain for years to come.

Seventeen Point Agreement

In 1950 Tibet needed help which only India could provide or at least India's concurrence was very important. Prior to that Britain was around to help or guide and China was not strong enough to bully it. Now Britain had left India and along with it its keen interest in the affairs of Tibet. A strong and determined China was threatening to swallow it. It was no match to China's military might. Any responsible Indian government had no alternative but to help Tibet if it wanted a safe frontier. Nehru had no courage to help. A helpless Tibet was forced to send its delegation to Peking to fend for itself. The delegation left India on 25th Oct. 1950 and the same day the Chinese declared that their army had been instructed to move into Tibet. Very soon thereafter as soon as the U.N. dropped the issue of Tibet (in which India had played the most dubious role) the Chinese forces that had consolidated their position in Chamdo started their march towards Lhasa.

Only a year and a half back the Tibetan Government had ordered all Chinese out of Tibet and now the same Chinese were breathing down their necks with full vengeance. Tibetans had never found themselves into such hopeless situation and such gloom had never engulfed Tibet. But they had full faith in Dalai Lama. He was preparing for his religious examinations on completion of which he would have been declared the head of the Buddhist church and the state. But these were unusual times and it was decided to appoint him ruler with immediate effect. On 17th Nov. 1950 the Dalai Lama was given full state powers. In usual circumstances this would have happened two years later.

Then there was the news of the advancing Chinese. And what if the Chinese entered Lhasa? Safety of the Dalai Lama was the paramount concern of the Tibetans. It was decided to shift Him to a safer place. On the night between Dec. 18 and 19 He started on his secret journey towards Indian border town of Yatung. On the way to Yatung thousands of monks surrounded him and lay down on the ground pleading with him not to leave them in that hour of disaster. The officers were caught unaware and did not know what to do. The young God king took the situation in his own hands.

“He could do more for his country if he did not fall into the hands of the enemy and that he would return as soon as an agreement with them had been reached. His assurance comforted the populace. Soon the sea of red robes parted, permitting the caravan to proceed, and on January 4, 1951, sixteen days after leaving the holy city, it arrived at its destination.”¹⁰

The outcome of negotiations between the Chinese and the Tibetans was a foregone conclusion. Chinese had succeeded in opening the negotiations in Peking. Some of the members of the delegation had gone directly to Peking from Tibet including the leader of the delegation, Ngabo Ngawang Jigme. He was the administrator of eastern Tibet when the Tibetans had surrendered to the Chinese troops. The Tibetans were helpless and were forced to sign an agreement on 23rd May, 1951, known as ‘The Agreement of the Central People’s Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet’ or ‘The 17 Point Agreement’. The very title of the agreement declares Tibet as a local government under the Central government of China.

This was a serious setback for independent status of Tibet. The Tibetans tried their best not to yield to the Chinese. But the Chinese were threatening them with dire consequences if they did not listen. As per the Simla Agreement of 1914, Chinese officials and army personnel were not to be stationed inside Tibet. Now they had got the right to do so. The Chinese had assured the Tibetans of autonomy but the former were not honest and were determined to absorb Tibet. They had no intension to respect Tibetan autonomy or religion.

The Tibetan delegation did not have the seal of the Dalai Lama with them. Without the seal the Tibetans would not have given any importance to the agreement. But the Chinese were not going to wait for it. So they fabricated the seal of Dalai Lama and affixed the same on the agreement and kept the seal with themselves.

When Dalai Lama was still at Yatung, the Chinese administrator met him. He was on his way to Lhasa via India. He requested Dalai Lama to return to Lhasa. The Tibetans also wanted the Dalai Lama to return. Finally Dalai Lama returned on 17th August 1951. “We were helpless. Without friends there was

nothing we could do but acquiesce, submit to the Chinese dictates in spite of our strong opposition, and swallow our resentment. We could only hope that the Chinese would keep their side of this forced one sided bargain,"¹¹ said the Dalai Lama. Chinese put pressure on Him to give his approval to the agreement. Finally he had to accept the agreement.¹²

From then onwards it was a nightmare for Dalai Lama as to how to deal with the Chinese authorities in Tibet. The Tibetans had never reconciled to the fact of Chinese domination over Tibet. They were determined to defy the Chinese authority. The later expected the Dalai Lama to keep the Tibetans under control. It was clear that the Chinese were capable of using brutal force to check the Tibetans. It was also important for Dalai Lama to prevent them from harm as far as he could. The Chinese also needed a few years to tighten their grip on Tibet by way of building means of communication between China and Tibet. So they were also restrained from using force to a large extent. Dalai Lama did his best to deal as diplomatically with the Chinese as he could. The situation was destined to go from bad to worse for the Tibetans.

Before the agreement was signed, Nehru had spoken in favour of a peaceful agreement between the Chinese and the Tibetans. He wrote on 1stSept. 1950, ".....we have been trying for some months past to help a peaceful settlement between China and Tibet."¹³ After the signing of the agreement he wanted to avoid the issue of Tibet. At AICC meeting on 14thJuly, 1951, he said, "What is happening in Tibet is not quite clear. We know something. We do not know something else. Why should we discuss it when we are not quite sure what is happening and what is not happening?"¹⁴

Or see the note of Nehru to S.N.Haksar, Joint Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, 21July, 1951, "We have had nothing to do with it (agreement) and we have not been consulted at any stage either by the Tibetans or the Chinese. Our general advice to the Tibetan delegation, when it came here, was that we hoped that they would come to a peaceful settlement with the Chinese"¹⁵ Nehru had conveniently forgotten that he was instrumental in forcing the Tibetans to go to Peking and had not allowed its case to be heard at the U.N. on the ground that India was hopeful of a peaceful agreement between Tibet and China. Again and again

he had pleaded with the Chinese to reach a peaceful agreement with the Tibetans.

The Chinese did not have much respect for the Seventeen Point Agreement. Their purpose was only to pacify the Tibetans and the world opinion. Their real aim was to tighten its grip on Tibet. After Dalai Lama's return to Lhasa, Chinese troops also entered soon thereafter. They systematically promoted Panchan Lama to challenge the supreme authority of Dalai Lama. They forced the Tibetan government to remove from the government officials whom they did not like. They took to building roads on a grand scale to link Tibet with China. Tibetans were forced to work on the roads and many Tibetans died while building roads. The Chinese forced and persuaded the Tibetan government and monasteries to give them loan of silver and grains; in most cases never to be returned. Sikang Tibet highway and Chinghai Tibet highway that linked Lhasa to China were completed in 1954. Prices of food grains increased many-fold with a large number of Chinese around. "When the first vehicles began to arrive in 1953, they brought not more supplies but more and more Chinese. Prices rose still further."¹⁶

Transportation of Rice for the Chinese

As the Chinese were finding it difficult to meet their rice requirements in Tibet, they approached India. Nehru willingly arranged transport of rice from China to Tibet via India. At a press conference on 21 June, 1952, he was asked, "Is it a fact that you allowed rice to be sent to Tibet?"

He replied, "Not in big quantities. We did allow a small quantity of rice, *relatively* small quantity, as an exceptional caseBecause of their great need, we have allowed some small quantity of rice to go through."¹⁷ Note the mention of 'small quantity'. He used the words thrice in one sentence. This was typical of Nehru. What ever he wanted to say he would say emphatically.

In those high mountains with virtually no roads it was a very difficult job and the quantity was definitely big relatively if we use Nehru's word. "A thousand mules were constantly on the move for several months."¹⁸ To Panikkar he wrote on 24.5.52, "...We have agreed to grant transit facilities for food grains up to end of 1952 at the rate of 500 tons a month, subject to weather and availability of mules. We are willing to work for transport of target of 3,500 tons.Two thousand five hundred tons is, therefore, the probable attainable target and it might be worthwhile explaining this to the Chinese so as to avoid future misunderstandings."¹⁹ He was speaking as if that was the most natural thing to do. There is hardly any need to say that very often he took such decisions himself without consulting his cabinet.

At the same press conference he was further asked if the transit of rice had any military implication. Nehru said, "No, absolutely nothing of that kind." The fact of the matter was that the rice was being transported for the use of the Chinese army. Unmindful of the derogatory language, or the military activities or the political repercussions of the activities of the Chinese, his only aim was to keep the Chinese happy.

India's political agent in Sikkim was to look after the transport of rice to Tibet, and was observing the arrogant Chinese from close quarters. "But suddenly all was sweetness and light. The reason became apparent when a request was made for shipment of Chinese rice through India and Sikkim to their troops in Tibet. This could, and indeed should, have been made the occasion for a settlement of the major problems with China as a prelude to the altogether unprecedented help requested from the Government of India. It simply did not occur to anyone in Delhi, and such caution as I advised was brushed aside. Released from anxiety on account of supplies, the Chinese and local Tibetan labour were able to press ahead with the vitally important task of creating a network of communications to defend the frontiers of China with India."²⁰

China was moving fast to integrate Tibet into China. It had entered into the seventeen point agreement with Tibet which gave it legitimacy to control it. Chinese troops were in Tibet and Chinese administration was established at a fast pace. A network of roads was being built with utmost sense of urgency. On the other hand

in India no steps were taken to counter any Chinese threat. For Nehru there was no threat as such and if there was fear of any Chinese aggression, then, *“the best remedy is to stress in public statements that we do not consider there is any chance of any Chinese aggression and therefore we are not afraid of it.”*²¹ For years on end he faithfully followed this policy. For him the Western countries were the real villains. *“Looking again at the historical perspectives, it is to the interest of Western Powers to prevent China and India getting too friendly.”*²² He had a sharp tongue. Those that apprehended danger from the Chinese were termed as amateur strategists, *“.....and many amateur strategists talked and wrote about the new dangers to India.”*²³

Nehru had pretended as if India had nothing to worry from China as it had no political interest in Tibet. But the fact was that India had very significant presence in Tibet. As the Chinese were tightening their hold on Tibet, it was equally important for them to remove Indian influence there. “Zhou En-Lai suggested in September 1951 to discuss problem of Indian interests in Tibet and the boundary between India and Tibet.”²⁴ So soon after entering Tibet China was knocking at India’s door.

Border Question to Trade Agreement

Prior to 1950 India, had a peaceful northern border. Tibet was its neighbouring country through out its northern border. Both were peace loving countries and were content with the borders as they were. Both the countries were separated by the Himalayan ranges. Being the highest ranges in the world was another reason why India and Tibet had no reason to clash. The ranges served the purpose of a high and strong boundary wall.

All that changed in 1950 when China became India’s neighbour. China was young and dynamic and had expansionist plans. It had forcefully laid claim to the whole of Tibet and in the absence of any meaningful resistance to its designs it was apparent that it would occupy Tibet soon. This changed the whole equation

on the northern borders. Concept of a peaceful border disappeared within no time. The Himalayan ranges no longer appeared impregnable with Chinese as its neighbours.

But amazingly, Nehru did not see any danger from the Chinese side and on the contrary he saw the possibility of a good friend in the making and had vision of changing Asia and the world in association with China. In 1910, the Chinese forces had reached the north east corner of India while advancing towards Tibet. This had alarmed the British, who made arrangements to make the Indian border safe. They laid down pony tracks, which remained the only tracks for the Indian army right up to the 1962 war in many areas. Nehru had earlier messed up the matter of Kashmir and later the Tibetan question. Then he was destined to mess-up the border - issue. Sardar Patel had made it very clear that he did not consider China as India's friend. But as Nehru was not at all capable of facing the Chinese challenge, his options were limited. He hoped that he could turn China into a friend. To do so he took steps which were totally illogical and did irreparable damage to Indian as well as Tibetan interests. He tried to safeguard Indian interests at the cost of Tibetan interests and in the process harmed interests of both the countries. Communications were not developed and border left unsettled when a trade agreement was reached with China; inviting it at India's door.

The Elusive Roads

As pressure mounted on Nehru, a committee was appointed to suggest steps India should take to meet the new challenge. Government of India appointed Himmat Singh Committee on 1st Oct. 1950, under the chairmanship of Deputy director of military operations, Brig. (later, Major General) Himmat Singhji. Major General Kulwant Singh, Chief of the General Staff, was also appointed on the committee. This committee had people who were experts in the matter of defense. Various measures were suggested by it, which included development of communications in the border areas. "For the first time the grave shortcomings in our

administration and security measures in these regions were brought to light forcefully and this left no doubt in any one's mind as to what was required and what should be done to overcome these deficiencies."²⁵ Unfortunately, as in the case with so many others who had advised Nehru to prepare India to face any threat from the Chinese: in this case also valuable advice was ignored by him. Almost nothing was done.

On 3 Nov.1950 a note was prepared by intelligence bureau which suggested that the administration in NEFA should be taken right up to the frontier. Similarly steps were to be taken all along the border to develop roads and telecommunications without delay. Armed forces were to be strengthened. Some troops could also be kept near the borders. It was also suggested to set up a strong intelligence network in the frontier. It was urged that the check posts should be immediately sanctioned. Sardar Patel accepted these suggestions and acted quickly. He referred to these suggestions in his letter to Nehru dated 7th Nov.1951. Practically nothing was done. I.B. did come up with 30 posts all along the border with a staff of 108. Otherwise, Nehru was too busy arranging rice for the Chinese in Tibet and trying to prove in many other ways to the Chinese how faithful he was to them.

We have already referred to Sardar Patel as to how he placed his apprehensions regarding the Chinese in front of Nehru. There is an impression in the country that Nehru did not get correct advice regarding China and at the most only Patel had given his some. That is not correct. At every stage he got correct advice but did not follow it. Rajaji wrote to Nehru regarding the Chinese on 1stNov.1950. Nehru tried to satisfy him regarding Chinese activities.²⁶ B.C. Roy wrote two letters to him on 14th Nov. Nehru assured the country that there was no danger from the Chinese side. In an interview on 11thAugust 1950 Nehru had said, "There has not been in India any direct fear of China as a country or of China's communism directly affecting India....China in the best of circumstances will take a generation to recover.all information we have is that they are too engrossed in their own problems."²⁷

At the same time the Nehru was at his best to convince his countrymen of his capability to look after the interests of the country, "The frontier from Bhutan eastwards had been clearly defined by the McMahon Line which was fixed by the Simla Convention of

1914. The frontier from Ladakh to Nepal is defined chiefly by long usage and custom....Our maps show that the McMahon Line is our boundary and that is our boundary—map or no map. That fact remains and we stand by that boundary, and we will not allow anybody to come across that boundary.”²⁸ Nehru said that in Parliament on 20th Nov. 1950. Further, he told the Parliament on 7th December, 1950, “Whether India had the necessary military resources or not, I would fight aggression whether it came from the mountains or the sea.”²⁹

Such statements convinced the people that he was competent and that the borders were very clearly defined. But Nehru’s rhetoric was for public consumption and he had no capacity, will, wish or determination to protect the borders and had no wish to fight the aggressor. From the beginning to the end he was thoroughly irresponsible. He was deliberately speaking plain lies in parliament. He did not fight when the occasion came. He did not protect the borders when the Chinese advanced.

He tried to convince everybody that the border question was not a difficult issue with China. At a press conference at Delhi, on 3rd Nov. 1951, Nehru said, “About maps, I may tell you something that I have not told you before, and that is this. All the maps used in China at present are very old maps and in fact, we were told by the Chinese government not to pay the slightest attention to these maps. They are their old maps and they have no time to print them anew.” While Nehru was sure that the border question would pose no problem, many members in the constituent assembly had expressed their apprehensions regarding Chinese intensions.

In addition to that Sampurnanand, a minister in government in Uttar Pradesh, had suggested to Nehru that all precautions be taken to lay strategic roads, construct barracks for soldiers and establish army outposts on the Indian side. The latter had replied on October 31, 1951 to say, “We have not been entirely negligent about our Tibetan border....While I agree with you that all necessary steps, within our resources, should be taken as soon as possible, I do not think that we need take too gloomy a view of the situation.”³⁰ As usual Nehru was not going to take any steps whatsoever.

G.S.Bajpai, Secretary General, ministry of External Affairs suggested on 5 October 1951, “The possibility of small forces

dribbling in through the numerous passes, and then combining to make trouble for us can not be and had not been ruled out.”³¹ This is exactly what happened later. But at that time Nehru had replied, “.....In any event, in the present state of affairs, it is not a proposition which we need consider. I need not go into the reasons for this, but it seems to me an obvious conclusion.....Any large expenditure on the army will starve the development of the country and social progress. That is much more likely to endanger the stability than the lack of army to protect frontiers.” He was good at finding an argument which would derail any good and correct suggestion

As per Gopal, “Nehru did not rule out infiltration by groups or even occupation of disputed areas. To forestall this, it was necessary to be clear as to where the boundary lay and to strengthen both administration and communication. Nehru’s attitude from the outset was that the frontier was firm, well-known and beyond dispute.....But there was yet another problem. The border had, except as regards Sikkim, not been demarcated on the ground; the boundary in the western and middle sectors had been defined, as Nehru said, by custom, usage and tradition, but not by treaty; and even as regards the McMahon Line, while the Chinese delegation at Simla had initialed the map on which it was shown, the Chinese government had not ratified it.”³² So the border was not as clear as Nehru had tried to make out.

To the Chief Minister of Assam Nehru wrote on March 13, 1952, “I was surprised to read your letter. I do not remember you complaining to me previously on this subject. The tribal areas in Assam have become far more important for us than they ever were before, because of developments in Tibet. They are a vital frontier to us and we have to give a great deal of attention to them and to the border....frontier problem had to be dealt with on a top-secret level. Even our cabinet here is not informed of details there.”³³ It was a good way to suggest him to keep quiet.

At a press conference at Delhi on 28 Feb. 1952 he said, “You take ten days to a fortnight to reach the frontier (McMahon Line) from any administrative centre, so, all that we are doing is to improve communications there up to our frontier and to get into better touch into it.” Nehru was speaking a lie. The government was doing almost nothing to improve communications and ten

years later also the borders remained ten to fifteen days march away according to Nehru himself.

His approach was casual throughout. Take another example. "For I.B. use we required hand-operated wireless sets and these were available only in the U.S.A. or Japan—hard currencies areas in those days. So we had to make do with heavy and crude World War II disposal stocks."³⁴ The situation was no better in 1962 when the forces were burdened with heavy and old wireless sets. Army units were forced to carry them on mountains. He was not at all committed to prepare the armed forces.

"It could however be claimed that it was not so much that India was not alerted by the developments in Tibet in 1950 and thereafter; what went wrong was Nehru's abject reliance on diplomacy —the starry-eyed Nehru brand of it —to counter the danger from China, to the neglect of the conventional instrument of polity, namely, the armed forces."

His real interest lay in having a say in affairs of other countries where only rhetorics would be enough. "On joining the Interim Government in September 1946, Nehru made clear that India would develop an active concern in world affairs."³⁵ "Because of various developments and our reactions to them, India has been thrust in the forefront of international affairs and great responsibility rests upon her."³⁶ He was telling that to the Chief Ministers of the country. He successfully projected himself as a world class leader.

He wrote to the chief ministers regularly for years and would go into detail regarding the events throughout the world and the significant role he was playing on the world scene. All this was meaningless if he was not capable of looking after the security of his own country. He himself had said, 'I have to judge every question from the Indian view-point. If India perishes, I must say—selfishly, if you like to call it—it does not do me any good if other nations survive.'³⁷ His actions hardly justified his words.

Communications was one area which could not be neglected and he also received correct advice time and again. In spite of that he didn't give due importance to developing roads in the border areas.

The Undefined Border

Once the Chinese had a foothold in Tibet (Their administrator had reached Tibet, Dalai Lama had returned to Lhasa, the Chinese had secured the 17 Point Agreement and their forces had spread to various areas of Tibet.) their most important task was to challenge the Indian presence in Tibet. The Indian ambassador to Peking was called by Zhou En-Lai on 27th September 1951, to discuss the issue. Next day the ambassador reported the discussion to Nehru, "Zhou En-Lai stated that there was no difference of viewpoint between India and China and he was particularly anxious to safeguard in every way Indian interests in Tibet. There was no territorial dispute or any controversy in this matter between India and China; and the question of 'stabilization of the Tibetan frontier', which was a matter of common interest to India, Nepal and China, could best be done by discussion between the three countries."³⁸ The issues at stake were the Indian interests in Tibet and the border with India.

From the language of the Chinese it appears that they were not in a position to take an unreasonable stand at that time. That was the time to take up the issue of the border with them. But Nehru was not confident of the Chinese designs. So, from the very beginning he avoided discussions with them. At the same time he concluded that what Zhou En-Lai had told him verbally, implied recognition of Indian borders. This is what he accepted in a publication of 1961.³⁹ The gullible suggestion of Nehru prompted the officials to suggest that a clear statement from the Chinese was a must. ".....Even so, this shrouded sentence was not an explicit recognition of the frontier, and the senior officials at Delhi favoured making such a recognition part of a general settlement. 'India should not withdraw her garrisons from Gyantse and Yatung without securing this.'" (Notes of G.S. Bajpai dt.21 November and K.P.S. Menon Foreign Secretary, dt. 22 November 1951.)⁴⁰

I.B. had also given similar advice. "I. B. expressed the view that any negotiation with China should relate to the frontier also as the Chinese had made no announcement renouncing their claim on large parts of northern India which Chinese maps showed as falling within China."⁴¹

“Nehru then approved the issue of explicit instructions to Panikkar to secure Chinese affirmation of the McMahon Line and the rest of the frontier with Tibet.”⁴² It has been suggested that Panikkar did not take up the issue of the frontier with Zhou when he met him on many occasions and Zhou himself did not discuss the issue of the frontier between Tibet and India. If Nehru’s instructions were specific then how could Panikkar defy them? Whatever he did must have been with the concurrence of Nehru. A shrewd Nehru knew how to bypass the suggestions of the officials and how to put blame on someone else. What interest Panikkar had in not following the orders of the government. And if he did not follow the orders in such important matters then he should have been removed!

As per Panikkar, Zhou ignored the border issue. He wrote to Nehru on 15 June, 1952 regarding his meeting with Zhou En-Lai the previous day, “..... Zhou En-Lai ‘clearly wanted to convey the impression’ that the only issues to be settled related to ‘an agreement in principle’ about the ‘transformation’ of the Indian Mission in Lhasa ‘into a proper Consulate-General’ as an ‘immediate practical step’ and negotiations for India’s ‘special rights like military posts, trade marts and posts & telegraphs’ at suitable times subsequently.”⁴³ Panikkar had some valuable suggestion for Nehru. He wrote to Nehru suggesting that there was no need to discuss the boundary issue. It should be noticed that somehow Panikkar suggested what Nehru desired. If Nehru was clear about his stand, he could have conveyed the same to Panikkar in no uncertain terms. When he desired he had taken away the Kashmir portfolio from Sardar Patel even without informing him. He knew how to have his way. Panikkar could not dictate him.

Nehru’s reply showed as if he was keen on taking up the border issue. His telegram to Panikkar of 16 June, 1952 read, “We think it rather odd that, in discussing Tibet with you, Zhou En-Lai did not refer at all to our frontier. For our part, we attach more importance to this than to other matters.” He thought there might be some advantage in India not raising the issue, though he did not say why; but added: “I do not quite like Zhou En-Lai’s silence about it.....”⁴⁴ Soon afterwards, Panikkar was in Delhi on his transfer and convinced Nehru that the issue of the boundary should not be pursued. Bajpai who had by then been appointed the

Governor of Bombay protested regarding the going on with the Secretary General N.R. Pillai and Panikkar himself.

If Panikkar was the villain who had been giving wrong advice to Nehru then the correct course could have been followed after he was shifted from Peking. Panikkar had no reason to avoid the border issue. The question arises why Nehru listened to him and not to the top most officials in the foreign office. Nehru is claimed to be an expert on international affairs. It goes without saying that there cannot be two opinions that the only sensible thing was to have a clear agreement on the issue of borders. It was Nehru who wanted to avoid it. As per records Mao assured Panikkar's successor Raghavan that India had nothing to fear from China.

Officials from Delhi went to China to discuss about a trade agreement. "The official involved in the discussion (agreement of 1954) did once more suggest that the Indian side might include in its general statement a definite declaration about the boundary; but Nehru ruled that the matter need not be raised 'For the present'. Note of T.N. Kaul, dt.27 August, and Nehru's directive, 30 August 1953.⁴⁵ Finally, he acted on Nehru's wish not to discuss the border with China. Panikkar was not around. This was Nehru's typical behaviour in dealing with the Chinese for twelve long years.

He was good at finding out an argument when he was not doing the correct thing. "But the best way to prevent this frontier from becoming a dangerous one was to have friendly relations with China, develop the border regions and win over the local inhabitants to the conception of India."⁴⁶ Not surprisingly, Panikkar's advice was not far away. From Cairo, where he had been posted, he wrote to the Foreign Secretary soon after Nehru made his note. He thought that the Indian side should break off negotiations if the Chinese themselves raised the question of the frontier; for to agree to discuss would mean that there was something to discuss.⁴⁷ That was a totally illogical argument. It is doubtful if Panikkar could have gone so far on his own accord. Also there was no good reason for him to interfere in this blunt manner.

As could have been expected, Nehru agreed with Panikkar and agreed that the Indian side should refuse, and express surprise at the Chinese reopening a settled issue; but any walk-out should require specific reference to Delhi.⁴⁸ If it was such a clearly settled issue then China should have been made to put it on paper. If

China was not discussing the issue it was surprising for Nehru and if China was willing to discuss the issue then again it was surprising for him. There was more than what met the eye. "Nehru was not in favour of doing so (i.e. discussion regarding McMahon Line) as he was not hopeful of China accepting it."⁴⁹ But such matters had to be sorted out. "To keep quiet on the border issue was to have disastrous consequences in the long run."⁵⁰

"One opportunity after another had been allowed to slip by, justifying Gopal's remark that the shift of attitude was to have disastrous consequences."⁵¹ "India would refuse to open the question of negotiation (McMahon Line) when or if the Chinese did raise it.' This decisionwas pregnant with momentous consequences. It was, indeed, to make the Sino-Indian boundary problem insoluble."⁵² One can find no justification what so ever for not settling the border issue.

As the border issue was not discussed, Gopal wants to suggest that the administration should have followed Nehru's instructions to contain damage. "In the face of that omission (securing a clear and explicit recognition of India's frontier), the best Nehru could do was to insist that now at least the central ministries and the provincial governments should act on the directives he had been issuing since 1947. Administration should be pushed right up to the border and check posts strung out along its entire length, priority should be given to the building of communications, the intelligence system should be strengthened, and the border areas developed economically and their inhabitants integrated in the national life of India. The impact of government would have to make up for remiss diplomacy."⁵³ This is exactly what Sardar Patel had suggested long back.

Nehru himself was the biggest impediment in the way of implementation of such policies. This has been shown in the previous pages. At the same time he went on assuring the country year after year that all necessary steps were being taken to safeguard the frontiers. In fact for many years practically no steps were taken and when taken it was too little too late. He was not ready to discuss the border as it was a definite one. At the same time he would enter into an agreement with China regarding Tibet because China's claim was a definite one. Nehru's deeds are full of such contradictions.

The Trade Agreement

The trade agreement with China concluded after two and a half years of negotiations. When Zhou had first suggested holding negotiations regarding Tibet, he could not have expected Nehru to go as far as he did. For nothing in return, Nehru went all out to please Zhou. The agreement on Tibet was signed in Peking on 29 April, 1954. It provided for:

1. Establishment of three trade agencies by each side;
2. Recognition of a number of trade marts.
3. Facilities for traditional pilgrimages in both countries by persons of 'Hindu and Buddhist faiths'.

In a note of the same date India undertook to withdraw its military escorts stationed at Yatung and Gyantse and to hand over the postal, telegraph and public telephone services for a reasonable price, along with twelve rest-houses and other buildings owned by the Government of India in Tibet. "It was in fact a total exodus, which was replaced by normal consular and trade arrangements."⁵⁴ It was a complete sell out as Patel had feared three years ago. It was the end of an era. For a thousand years or more, India had direct dealings with the Tibetans. Now it would have to deal with the Chinese. And Tibet as a free country would cease to exist.

Earlier Nehru had said that India wanted to continue with its establishments in Tibet. Only a little friction from China was enough for him to change his mind. "In 1952 Chinese objected to the dispatch of fresh Indian troops to replace the guards at Gyantse and Yatung, and seized the wireless set of the Indian Trade agent at Gartok and prevented him from proceeding to the trade marts at Rudok and Taklakot. The Chinese also would not allow the Political Officer, Sikkim, to visit Lhasa except on a proper visa." It was a mild way of expressing their mind. The game was over. It was time for India to leave.

Nehru then sent a message to Zhou In-Lai in August, 1952, expressing surprise & regret at these happenings. "Zhou En-Lai however maintained as correct the action taken....He stressed....fresh negotiationsThus quite abruptly China had terminated all the privileges which India had enjoyed in Tibet for

nearly half a century. Communist China had followed the usual tactics of staging incidents first and creating a situation disadvantageous to the adversary, that she could not remedy unilaterally and thus forcing the latter to the negotiating table on Chinese conditions.”⁵⁵ Later Nehru told Parliament that the imperialist policies of Britain were not worth following. He was actually forced to withdraw.

To the Indian envoy in China he wrote, “Recently, some incidents have taken place when the local authorities in Tibet stopped our Trade Agent in Western Tibet from proceeding on his official tour to Rudok and his staff to Taklakot, both important trade marts for Indian traders and pilgrims. There has been a forcible seizure of his wireless set which is essential for the performance of his duties. We learnt of this incident with surprise and regret, because it did not seem to us in consonance with the friendly relations between our two countries.....A request was made for the return of the Trade Agent’s wireless communication facilities and for the Tibetan authorities to be instructed not to interfere with the functioning of our Trade Agent.”⁵⁶

All this was happening when India was making arrangements to transport rice for the Chinese. Also this was happening when Trade Agreement was taking final shape. Was it a technique of putting pressure on India? Nehru regretted the Chinese action because he was ready to do their bidding anyway. It was not proper for China to behave in such a manner when Nehru was ready to fully surrender to China. “In the course of the last three years, developments have taken place in Tibet which has created a new situation. The Government of India has recognized this new situation and expressed their readiness to adapt themselves to it.”⁵⁷

Having fully surrendered to the Chinese, a request was made to allow India a respectful exit from Tibet. As the whole case was already lost there was no forceful assertion of any Indian rights. Only humble petitions were made.

“The Chinese had assured earlier that they ‘were not desirous of abruptly bringing to an end existing Indian institutions and arrangements in Tibet, as such a course would create a vacuum.’ “Other incidents have taken place. It is the practice for the military escorts at Gyantse and Yatung to be replaced from time to time.

The Government of India has been informed that the Chinese Government was not in a position to agree to the replacement of these escorts. The replacement of one of these escorts has already crossed the border and has reached Yatung. This movement took place before the Chinese Government's reply was received. The Government of India has also been informed that their Political Officer in Sikkim must present a passport, duly visaed by the Chinese authorities, when he pays a visit to Gyantse and Yatung."⁵⁸

It was clear that India had special rights in Tibet. As the Chinese were nowhere around no Chinese visa was ever required. But things had changed. India was not capable of asserting itself forcefully. The Chinese had made it clear that the time had come to forgo all the rights it had gained from a free Tibet. Otherwise the Chinese gave hint of how they would do the arm-twisting.

The opposition parties were very bitter about the agreement. They felt that grave injustice had been done to the Tibetans. In the agreement Tibet was again and again referred to as 'Tibet Region of China'. This was the first time ever that any country in the world had described Tibet as region of China. Even otherwise India had no business to define the status of Tibet. It implied Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. "This interpretation is borne out by Nehru's speech in the Lok Sabha where the agreement was attacked by several members, including the veteran Congress-man Purushottandas Tandon, the late Dr. S. PMookerjee, Dr. Satya Narayan Sinha, and Dr. H.N.Kunzru. 'Some criticism has been made that this is recognition of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet,' said the prime minister. 'I am not aware of any time during the last few hundred years when Chinese sovereignty or, if you like, suzerainty, was challenged by any outside country, and all during this period whether China was weak or strong and, whatever the Government of China was, China always maintained this claim to sovereignty to Tibet.' Clearly in Nehru's mind the distinction between suzerainty and sovereignty was of no great consequence. That was also the Chinese view."⁵⁹ Now it should be clear as to who equated suzerainty with sovereignty; Panikkar or Nehru?

It is worth noticing that at the Simla Conference in 1913-14, China had only claimed suzerainty over Tibet with very little say or interference in Tibet. In early fifties the same Nehru had first

brought the issue of suzerainty of Tibet on the ground that he also stood for Tibetan autonomy. He had also told Parliament in 1950, that the issue of Tibet was to be decided by the Tibetans themselves and no body else. He had again and again said that if he had accepted Chinese suzerainty over Tibet then he had also accepted Tibetan autonomy. All that was forgotten!

“The Sino-Indian Treaty of 1954 caused a terrible shock to the Tibetans. They had already been upset by the unilateral Indian acceptance of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet which, according to them, allowed China to commit aggression against that country.”⁶⁰ Delhi had pushed the Tibetan delegation to Peking to sign the 1951 agreement with China which was the first agreement in twentieth century between Tibet and China where India was not a party.

Nehru told Parliament that the British had expanded into and made several types of arrangements in Tibet which we had no reason to continue. “If so, the question naturally arose: Why then accept the British **imperialist** concept of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet? When Nehru was criticized for going further that the British in accepting any right of China over Tibet, he contemptuously replied, ‘*Let me tell him, these treaties and maps were all prepared by British imperialists. These treaties and maps are intended to show that we must act as they did.*’ ‘In saying this, the prime minister overlooked one fact: that he himself had accepted Chinese suzerainty over Tibet as a political legacy from the British.”⁶¹ In 1950, Nehru’s argument was that he had accepted Chinese suzerainty over Tibet because the British had done so. Now he had gone much further and accepted Tibet as a region of China. He did so because he was not going to follow the British.

This agreement was without any reference to the Simla Agreement of 1914. But India’s claim to McMahon Line was based on this agreement and that agreement gave upper hand to India in the matter of Tibet. “The Indians made no allusion to the trade agreement the British had signed with the Tibetans in 1914, in pursuance of the Simla Convention, but treated the negotiations as if their only antecedent lay in a 1908 trade agreement which China had signed with Britain.”⁶²

If Nehru had failed to reach a satisfactory agreement with the Chinese he produced Panchsheel as the trump card; the outcome

of India's talks with the Chinese. It was of no use. What came to be known as panchsheel was set out in the general statement of the 1954 agreement.

Panchsheel

While the opposition was most critical of the agreement; Nehru was trying to impress upon it that the real gain was in the acceptance of Panchsheel by China. As if it was a big miracle. It was presented as the guiding light for the whole humanity. In Parliament, while replying to the criticism of 1954 agreement Nehru claimed panchsheel to be the basic principle. "Live and let live,.....No one should invade the other, no one should fight the other....This is the basic principle which we have put in our treaty with China. These are words we have used: recognition of territorial integrity and sovereignty, nonaggression, noninterference, and we consider other things like mutuality. Now territorial integrity and sovereignty mean that there should be no invasion. Nonaggression also means the same thing, and noninterference means that there should be no interference in domestic affairs because some people are in the habit of interfering in other people's affairs." "Nehru referred to panchsheel in words which the hindsight of history exposes as both pathetic and prophetic."⁶³

On the basis of Panchsheel Nehru claimed that India and China were going to show to the world how to live as good neighbours. The whole thing was disgusting. China was the country that had crushed the independence of Tibet and India had turned itself into China's agent, and these two countries would show to the world how to live peacefully! "The new Agreement between China and India completely ignored Tibet's autonomy and was against all international morals, for the fate of a small country had been decided by two big neighbours without any reference to it.....The Prime Minister told me that the Tibetans had adequate grounds for these criticisms but, placed as she was without sufficient military power, India could not have done any better. He hoped

that, with the last vestiges of suspicion against India removed, China might adopt a reasonable attitude.”⁶⁴

The foundation of Panchsheel was based on suspicion. Throughout the period of negotiations on the border issue it was a game of one up man ship with China. For example, regarding the six passes referred to above, the Government of India had this to say, “The Chinese draft said, ‘(China) agrees to open the following passes....for entry and exit by traders and pilgrims’; the wording reflected the claim that Tibetan (and therefore Chinese) jurisdiction extended beyond the main passes in this sector.

The Indians —like the British before them—maintained that the boundary followed the watershed and that consequently the main passes were itself boundary features. Therefore they rejected the Chinese formulation; but rather than bringing the issue into the open they accepted a wording which avoided the question of ownership of the actual passes. ‘Traders may travel by the following passes....’⁶⁵ Similarly the position of McMahon Line was left vague. Bajpai was not persuaded...He argued that India should simply take the opportunity to inform China that she regarded the McMahon Line as the boundary, and intended to treat it as such. The Chinese could then either agree, ignore the statement (allowing silence to be interpreted as acquiescence), or disagree. In any case, India would know where she stood.’⁶⁶ But Nehru was not bold enough to stand tall and take a bold stand.

China had not shown much love for Panchsheel. But would not mind keeping Nehru happy in return for what it had got in the form of the Trade Agreement. Initial Chinese reluctance to agreeing to the inclusion of this provision was withdrawn on India’s insistence. As Nehru was not capable of taking a bold stance while dealing with China he adopted a unique strategy. As he had openly declared where the Indian border was and as he was making China to agree to Panchsheel, it would be forced to accept Indian border. He didn’t know!

China had no love for such niceties. Panchsheel was a totally worthless gimmick. “If verbal assurances of this character really meant what they said, the world would by now have talked itself into peace.”⁶⁷ Acharya Kripalani had called it ‘five nonsense’ and like so many of Nehru’s other gimmicks, fall flat on his face. “This was clutching at straws after the main opportunity had been

deliberately discarded.....On the other hand the Chinese had secured all they wanted and given away little.”⁶⁸ “But the chance of securing a clear and explicit recognition of India’s frontier at a time when India had something to offer in return had been lost.”⁶⁹

When pressure mounted on Nehru he claimed in his typical manner that he had no doubt that the agreement was the best thing India had done since independence. This agreement was for a period of eight years and at the end of that it was the Chinese who reminded India regarding renewing it. Nehru by then had so much of his best thing that he refused to extend it. The agreement was termed as a trade agreement because Nehru had said that India had only trade and cultural interests in Tibet. The implications of the agreement were political. For the first time in the world any country was recognizing Tibet as part of China.

Nehru claimed that he had made border secure. “Nehru’s overall assessment was, ‘We have gained instead something that is very important, i.e., a friendly frontier and an implicit acceptance of that frontier.’”⁷⁰ It was a plain lie and nothing else. ‘Nehru, whose on the record utterances were so prolific, must be particularly vulnerable to the count of inconsistency and transparent in his deliberate ambiguity.’”⁷¹

Actually, he had made the border a permanent source of conflict and the way laden for China to grab more and more Indian land in absence of an accepted border with China. Soon after Nehru’s letter to Mehta, China started quarrel on the border. Along with Panchsheel, “the other provision in the 1954 agreement was the listing of six passes, all in the middle sector, by which traders and pilgrims would be permitted to travel.”⁷² That very year China started dispute regarding those passes. It was making it clear that it had no respect for Panchsheel. It was making it clear that it had not accepted the border as per the claims made by India. That was an open challenge to Nehru. His options were limited. For the most part these disputes were never made public and China remained India’s friend.

“Ten days short of three months after the Tibet Agreement was signed the Chinese sent the first signal that friendly co-existence was over. In the course of a summer tour a party of the Indian Border Security Force camped on the Hoti plain south-east of Niti pass. On 17 July 1954, the Chinese Counsellor in Delhi presented

a note to the Ministry of External Affairs alleging that over thirty Indian troops crossed the Niti pass into Wuje of the Ari areas of Tibet. This action, the note maintained, was not in keeping with the principles of non-aggression and friendly co-existence.

After making thorough enquiries, Delhi handed the Counsellor a note dated 27th August. No Indian personnel, it said, had crossed the Niti pass into Tibet. On the contrary, some Tibetan officials tried to cross into Hoti.The two governments exchanged notes on Hoti for four years there after, although even from their own accounts the Chinese should have realized that Hoti was on the Indian side of the pass. On 1 September 1956 these differences were extended to Shipki la, the main and very clearly formed pass on the pilgrim route to Kailash and Mansarovar.....It may be surmised that these were probing actions to test Indian reactions.”⁷³

It was clear that the intentions of the Chinese were not good and that they wanted to encroach upon Indian territory. These actions of the Chinese should have alerted Nehru and he should have come to the conclusion that roads and check posts, which were not established up to that time, could no longer be delayed. But he would not do that. Only he would see to it that the public was not informed about these disputes. These disputes also came in the way of his concentrating his energy for the role of world leadership; which he thought destiny had reserved for him. Protection of the borders was left at the mercy of the Chinese.

Earlier at a press conference at Delhi on 28 Feb. 1952 Nehru's attention had been drawn to these areas. He had replied, "All there are high mountains. No body lives there. It is not very necessary to define these things.”⁷⁴ The above referred disputed areas were later occupied by the Chinese. They were never challenged. They never vacated those areas. It was clear to the Chinese, if not the Indians, that Nehru had no commitment to protecting the borders with Tibet. No effort was made to build roads. Thousands of sq. miles of land claimed by India was left unprotected. Nehru's inaction was an open invitation and encouragement to the Chinese for further encroachments.

Immediately after signing the agreement with the Chinese, one of the Indian posts in Tibet was washed away by floods. The Chinese never allowed it to be repaired. They also confiscated the

arms of the Indian guards at the post. They prohibited the Tibetans from helping in the repairs of the post. Where was the Chinese friend Nehru was speaking of? Those Chinese actions did not alarm him. The only implication the Chinese could have drawn was that he was incapable of facing the Chinese and as such they had the golden opportunity to encroach upon Indian territories. Nehru had hardly any time or aptitude to save the borders. He did not need a buffer state between India and China, but the Chinese needed to keep India as far away as possible from Tibet border, and as such needed to grab Indian Territory where they found no Indian presence. To do so, they did not use deceit. They only intimidated Nehru by their arrogance. The first large-scale encroachment was in the area called Aksai Chin.

Aksai Chin Road

When Nehru was singing praises in favor of Panchsheel; at that very time China had other ideas. Tibet was a big country. It was of utmost importance to the Chinese that they build a vast network of roads there. This they started to do as soon they set foot on Tibet soil. Very soon in their scheme of things they had decided to build a road through Aksai Chin. To reach western Tibet they would need a road through southern Tibet. But to do so would have alarmed India and it would take time to build such a road. Even otherwise it was not correct strategically to depend on one road alone to reach western Tibet. It could be reached through Yarkand in the north west of Tibet. But such a route passed through Aksai Chin, which India claimed to be its territory. But if the Chinese could connect Yarkand with western Tibet then strategically it would be a great achievement. They would have better control on western Tibet. It was a calculated risk worth taking. So they decided to build the road. And their gamble paid off well. Nehru would not resist them and only be of help to them. He would see to it that the whole road- building program was kept a closely guarded secret.

It was suggested as if Indian intelligence failed to inform the government about the development of the road. As Nehru had successfully put the blame on Menon, Kaul and Panikkar for so many of his shortcomings, it was perfectly in order to put blame on Mullick with regard to the construction of the road. But the later had done his job well. He has given detailed account of the road. It is clear that he was well acquainted with the progress of the road and had informed the government again and again in this regard. There was no good reason for him to hide the activities of the Chinese. It did not need high skills to come to know about the construction of the road. It was not being built secretly inside a room. There were Indian traders in Ladakh. Movement of the labourers to build the road was there for all to see.

“We had accurate information about the Chinese positions all over Tibet,.....Both the Prime Minister and the Home Minister were keen recipients of this intelligence and I often had long talks and discussions with them about Chinese preparations.....There has been some criticism that intelligence failed to get information in time about the Aksai Chin road. This is not correct.....In June 1951 Chinese troops reached western Tibet not through Aksai Chin but from Khotan (Hotien).....Then the Chinese decided (in 1952) to discard the longer route and go all out for this shorter route via Aksai Chin. After this the regular change over of troops from Yarkand to western Tibet started through this route though the movements were yet on foot or animals as the motor road had not yet been constructed.

“In November, 1952, we reported that the Chinese had engaged 2,000 labourers to develop this route into a jeep track and they planned to complete the construction by 1953.....In 1953, we reported that the jeep track to Rudok had been completed and regular jeep traffic had commenced.....The Indian Trade Agent at Gartok reported in July and again in September, 1955, that he had been told by the Chinese Vice Chief of the Foreign Bureau of Ngari that they were going to construct the Sinkiang-Gartok road via Rudok as it was shorter than the Lhasa-Rudok road.....In March, 1957, the Chinese first announced the completion of their Sinkiang-Tibet Highway.On October 6, 1957, the Sinkiang-Gartok road was formally opened with a ceremony at Gartok.....”⁷⁵

Nehru kept it as a closely guarded secret. When it came out in the open he managed to float a suggestion as if he was an innocent soul who never came to know of the road and the intelligence kept him in the dark. Not only the intelligence but even other sources had informed the government about the road. "Mr. Lakshman Singh from U.P. informed the government about the building of the Aksai Chin road in 1954. As our trade representative, he used to visit Tibet every year. His contacts were wide, and he met some labourers who had worked on building the road."⁷⁶ Our embassy in China informed the Indian government about this road. "Early in 1955, the Chinese started constructing a highway through the Indian territory of Aksai Chin in Ladakh. . . . The Indian military attaché at Peking, Brigadier S.S. Mallick, made a first reference to the development in a routine report to his Government as early as November 1955. No one in New Delhi took any particular notice of it. Six months later, in a special report to New Delhi, the Military Attache drew pointed attention to the construction of the strategic highway through our territory in Aksai Chin."⁷⁷

Mullick's information was not available to the other informants and as such they were behaving as if they were giving some important information to the government of India. The government was actually in the know of the developments but had decided to keep a discreet silence. The PM was incapable of safeguarding Indian interests, but at the same time he had the cheek to talk of moral responsibilities beyond India. After the signing of Seventeen Point Agreement Nehru had decided to totally ignore the issue of Tibet, as if Tibet did not exist and this gave him an opportunity to delve into the affairs of the outside world where he felt he had grave responsibilities on his shoulders.

"If we had not accepted it (responsibility in Korea), because of fear, we would have sunk in our own estimation as well as that of others, and we would have helped in aggravating the perilous situation in the world."⁷⁸ As he could not save Indian interests he decided to save the world. Where only rhetorics would suffice, Nehru had no parallel. In his address at Columbia University, he had said, "When man's liberty or peace is in danger we cannot and shall not be neutral; neutrality would be a betrayal of what we have fought for and stand for."⁷⁹ In the matter of Tibet; what to

speak of not remaining neutral: he had become a supporter of the Chinese.

America should have been on best of terms with India but Nehru turned it against India with his remarks, "Asia has been and will continue to be the scene of hydrogen bomb experiments and of war in which Asians are made to fight Asians. It may be that it will be Asians again who will have the unfortunate privilege of experiencing the effects of atomic bombing."⁸⁰ Asians did turn against Asians on Indian borders but not because of America but because of Nehru.

At the same time Nehru's ego knew no bounds. "I have been watching with restrained pride and pleasure as well as an ever growing sense of responsibility and humility, the growth of India's prestige in the world....and facts are compelling the world to give a new status and position to India in the larger schemes of things."⁸¹ What was the worth of such boasting if he could not save his country's interests? He could speak these words because he kept the country in the dark about the happenings in Tibet and on Indian borders. He said all this when he was doing irreparable damage to Indian and Tibetan interests. China had no use for such gimmicks. When Nehru was busy with such rhetorics; China was set to complete the important task of absorbing Tibet.

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17. *Selected Works of JLN*, vol. No. 18, 1996, Oxford, page 477.
18. Lall, John, *Aksaichin and Sino-Indian Conflict*, page 236
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28. Lall, page237/Gopal vol. no.2.
29. Ibid. page236.
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32. Gopal, *Jawahar Lal Nehru*, vol. no. 2, page176.
33. *Selected Works of JLN*, vol. no. 17, page 385.
34. Mullick, page127.
35. Sarvapalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. no. 2, page 43.
36. *Letters to the Chief Ministers*, Vol. no. 2, page 227.
37. Sarvapalli Gopal, vol. no. 1, page 292..
38. Gopal, *Jawahar Lal Nehru*, Vol. no. 2, page176. Prime Minister on Sino-Indian Relations, *Govt. of India*, vol. no.1, 1961, page 184-185
39. "In September 1951 Chou En-Lai, Prime Minister of China, suggested to the Indian Ambassador in Peking that the question of stabilization of the Tibetan frontier should be taken up as early as possible. Chou also stated, according to the Indian record of the conversation, 'there was no territorial dispute or controversy between India and China.' It was our belief that since our frontier was clear, there was no question of raising this issue by us." Nehru explained later. The government of India (read Nehru) took this to mean that the government of China accepted the boundary." Maxwell, page76
40. Gopal, *Jawahar Lal Nehru*, vol. 2, page177
41. Mullick, *My Years with Nehru*, page 150.

42. Lall John, *Aksaichin and Sino-Indian Conflict*, 1989, Allied Publishers, page 237 Also see Maxwell, page 76.
43. *Selected Works of JLN*, vol. no.18, page474.
44. Lall, page 238/Gopal, *Jawahar Lal Nehru*, vol. 2 page 178.
45. Gopal, *Jawahar Lal Nehru*, vol.2, page 179.Also Lall, page 238.
46. *Ibid.* page 180. Note from Nehru, dt.25 October 1953.
47. *Ibid.* Page 180.
48. *Ibid.* Page 180.
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50. Gopal, *JLN*, vol. no.2, page 180.
51. Lall, *Aksaichin and*, page 238.
52. Maxwell, *India's China War*, page 74.
53. Gopal, *JLN*, vol. no. 2, page 181.
54. Lall, *Aksaichin and*, page 239.
55. Mullick, *My Years with Nehru*, page 150.
56. Sent on 1September 1953 to N. Raghavan to convey it to Zhou En-lai. *Selected works of JLN*, 23, page 485.
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59. Frank Moraes, *The Revolt in Tibet*, copyright 1960, Sterling Publishers P. Ltd, Delhi, 1966, page 125.
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63. *Ibid.*, page 129.
64. Mullick, *My Years with Nehru*, page 157.
65. *White Paper III*, Government of India, page 62-63/ Maxwell, page 78
66. Maxwell, *India's China War*, page 77.
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70. Gopal, *JLN*, vol.2, page 181. Nehru to G.L.Mehta on 29 June. 1954
71. Maxwell, *India's China war*, page 14.
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74. *Selected Works of JLN*, vol. no. 17 page 477.
75. Mullick, page 195-196.
76. Nayar, *Between the Lines*, page 135.
77. Mankekar, *Guilty Men of 1962*, page 27

78. Gopal, JLN, Letters to Chief Ministers, vol. 2, page 174, 6thNovember, 1953
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80. Ibid., Page191.
81. Nehru on9.8.1952, ibid. page 166

If Protest Notes were Lethal Missiles

China had it All

Worst for Tibet was yet to come! China was clear about its goal whereas Nehru was simply passing time. China could not have asked for more. It had gained entry into Tibet almost without any challenge. As it was to bring under control a vast country, it needed time to consolidate its position. To do so it was of utmost importance to maintain peace in Tibet. To achieve this, China bought peace with the Lamas and the aristocracy. Initially, the social structure was not disturbed and the monasteries were not touched. Money was also brought into Tibet. Not all the money was brought from China. They borrowed money from the monasteries in Tibet most of which was never returned.

The flow of Chinese money helped trade between India and Tibet to flourish. Tibetan traders would come to India to buy goods. Kalimpong was the main trade-centre in India. The trade in Kalimpong had never been so good. Mule train of a hundred or more mules, laden with goods, was a common sight in mid fifties. Beautifully decorated mules would leave Kalimpong on their onwards journey to Tibet. One cannot imagine what a scene it was when the mule trains would move! Tibetan traders would buy cloth, general goods, imitation jewelry, readymade garments and what not. And when the traders from Kalimpong would go to Calcutta to buy their requirements, word would spread that the traders from Kalimpong had arrived. So good was the business. Traders from India had shops in Yatung and Phari in Tibet. These were trade marts agreed upon between Tibet and British India way back in 1905. All this was only going to last as long as the Chinese had settled down in Tibet.

Overall, on the surface, the Chinese tried their best to give an impression that they were for the betterment of the lives of the

Tibetans. But at heart they had no love for the Tibetans. They succeeded in keeping some Tibetans happy and satisfied for the time being. Also some newspaper reports appeared appreciating the Chinese rule. Nehru was the last man to miss the opportunity to show that his policies were after all showing good results. He wrote to Bisnuram Medhi on March 9, 1955, "I have just been reading an account about Tibet by a correspondent of the New York Times. This correspondent is strongly opposed to the Chinese communist government. And yet he has written as follows. I quote a paragraph from a long article,

"By mild and polite governance the Chinese have made themselves surprisingly popular. Their troops have behaved in exemplary fashion. The fame of their road-building programme—which has now brought truck convoys to Lhasa -has spread beyond Tibet. They have constructed new schools in Lhasa. Chinese has not been made a compulsory language. Ruined monasteries have been rebuilt and others are being subsidized. Even guerrilla resistance in East Tibet was only gently quashed and its leader generously treated."¹

This was not the view of the Tibetans. One article was not enough to give a correct picture. Soon the things would come into open. "The Sino-Tibetan agreement, dictated by Peking and assuring Tibet of regional autonomy, was hailed as a great diplomatic victory in New Delhi and as an endorsement of the Government of India's farsighted policy. Events were to prove how nearsighted that policy was."² Tibetans had a true feeling of things to come. The Tibetans had no good reason to trust the Chinese. "Age old experience had taught the Tibetans to regard every Chinese penetration into Tibetan territory with the greatest possible misgiving."³

Time and again Nehru claimed that his policies were in the best interest of Tibet. But it was not so. His policies were based on the presumption that the Chinese could be made to behave in a responsible and humane manner. That didn't happen.

Chinese in Amdo

The Chinese activities in Amdo gave a foretaste of things to come. For a long time Amdo was under Chinese administration. In 1949, Thubten Norbu, elder brother of the Dalai Lama was the Abbot of Kumbum monastery in Amdo near the birthplace of the Dalai Lama. The Chinese were already interfering with their affairs. They had even burnt a monastery in the area and had done damage to two other. They had also put up their people in the monasteries in the area. Soon Thunben Norbu was placed under the watchful eyes of the Chinese. "He (the Chinese Governor) told me bluntly that he was leaving two of his men with me, and that he thought it best in the interests of the community; and particularly in the interests of my own security; that they should henceforth never leave my side. I protested, of course, but it was no use. I was now a guarded prisoner within my own monastery walls. My two wardens never let me out of their sight, and as they gave no indication of whether they could understand Tibetan or not I was hardly able to exchange a frank word even with my closest friends. In addition, the two were always trying to involve me in political discussions;in fact, they were subjecting me to that devilish procedure which has since become known as brain-washing."⁴

When he could not bear the Chinese pressure any more he decided to leave his post of abbot of Kumbum. "A year ago it had seemed to be an advantage for Kumbum that its abbot should be a brother of the Dalai Lama, but now it was quite clear that this very circumstance made it impossible for me to carry on any fruitful labors on behalf of the monastery."⁵ He told the congregation of monks, "Further, my persistent efforts to defend Kumbum and its monks against everything which was not in accordance with our beliefs and made me the target for attacks which almost completely prevented any fruitful activity on my part on behalf of the community. Because of all these circumstances I had been forced to the conclusion that the best thing in the interests of the monastery would be for me to resign my high office."⁶

The Chinese did not leave him alone. He was almost a captive of the Chinese. He would be released if he agreed to go to Lhasa; to persuade the Tibetans to accept the Chinese as their liberators.

They even suggested that if Dalai Lama did not listen to him, it was all right to kill him. "It was only by dint of exercising the greatest self-control that I was able to conceal from my interlocutors the storm of indignation which their words loosed in me. What sort of a man did they think I was, for heaven's sake?...With great difficulty I forced myself to be calm and to answer them in a matter-of fact way."⁷

But he did not forgo the opportunity provided by the Chinese to escape from their clutches. So he agreed to go to Lhasa and speak to the government there. Once he reached Lhasa, naturally there was no question of his working for the Chinese. But he had got first hand experience of their ways.

Years later, Dalai Lama was in India in 1956. Zhou En-Lai was also there and so was Norbu. Zhou expressed his desire to meet the latter. Zhou made a deep impression on him. "The man's personality was outstanding even in the illustrious gathering which was present that day. Shortly before, the Indian Premier Nehru had engaged me in a friendly conversation, and I had an opportunity of telling him of my experiences during the past few years. Zhou En-Lai then came up to us with marked affability, and his whole bearing exuded the proverbial politeness of the highly cultured Chinese of the old school. He behaved himself in a very conciliatory fashion and his soft voice positively caressed the ear. Altogether his distinguished appearance and his very real charm were fascinating."⁸

Zhou wanted Norbu back in Tibet. But he could not persuade him. Norbu gave his reasons (His brother was also with him). "Communist China had not honoured the terms of the agreement which had been signed five years previously between Lhasa and Peking; and we quoted examples of Chinese behaviour obviously directed towards bringing about the final dissolution of Tibet as an independent State. We blamed the Chinese invaders for the shortage of foodstuffs, the rising prices, and the expropriation without compensation of land to build the strategic roads. We also complained that the powers of the Dalai Lama had been restricted and that our religion had been persecuted; and in support of this later contention I described my own disagreeable experiences as

Abbot of Kumbum. In conclusion we declared that we could only conclude from all this that the Chinese communists were deliberately out to destroy everything that was holy and dear to us.”⁹

The Chinese were polite in Lhasa but in far laying areas they were ruthless. Things had changed much after the arrival of the Chinese. Norbu gives account of the trip of his mother, who visited Amdo, Tibet in 1955-56 with Dalai Lama. “Only eight hundred monks were left in Kumbum, and they were living a wretched and indigent life, not knowing what was going to happen to them. Many of our relatives and friends in Tengtser and Balangtsa had been deported or had lost their lives in the disturbances of the past few years. And the only answer; those who were left would give to all inquiries as to their well-being was: ‘Thanks to the great goodness of Mao Tse-tung we are now living in peace.’ But their sad eyes, their sunken cheeks, their dilapidated houses and the poor state of the cattle were evidence enough that this was a lie learned by rote. My mother’s voice threatened to break down again and again as she told me about her experiences in our old home.”¹⁰ The Tibetans had entered the saddest phase in their history.

The Road Building

The Chinese were busy building roads in Tibet. But it was not for the benefit of the Tibetans. They needed roads to reach distant locations in Tibet. They forced the Tibetans to work on the roads. They also borrowed silver from the monasteries in Tibet. It was all to the disadvantage of the Tibetans. Slowly and slowly the Chinese diverted the Tibetan trade with India towards China.

“The two major highways linking Tibet with China, as well as the network of new roads inside Tibet, were described by the Chinese as having been constructed by voluntary labor. In fact long stretches of these roads were built by forced Tibetan labor and with the ‘loan’ of vast quantities of grain and silver from the reserve granaries and treasury of The Government of Tibet. A Tibetan official has since computed that during four years of road

construction —largely for Chinese military purposes —the Tibetans were required to ‘lend’ the equivalent of nearly 10 million dollars in terms of grain and another 300,000 dollars in silver coinage.

Working under conditions of extreme hardship comparable to those which attended the building of the Great Wall of China, thousands of Tibetans who were dragooned for this purpose paid with their lives, while others were subjected to much misery and suffering”¹¹ At that time Dalai Lama spoke of the sacrifice made by the Tibetans when many had died constructing the road. By the way, before the road was constructed, a mule took twenty-four days to cover the distance between Lhasa to India. After the road was made it took three days.

With the arrival of the Chinese the prices of goods went up. The roads built by the Chinese only increased the difficulties of the Tibetans. “When the first vehicles began to arrive in 1953, they brought not more supplies but more and more Chinese. Prices rose still further.”¹² More Chinese would arrive, as it was their basic policy to settle more and more Chinese in Tibet. With the limited supplies available in Lhasa the prices of goods increased by leaps and bounds. This made the life of the ordinary Tibetan very difficult.

The Chinese formed various committees of the Tibetans, through which they would spread their administration. Many Tibetans were forced out of fear to join such committees. In 1954, The Dalai Lama and many other Tibetans went to China on invitation of the Chinese to see China. The group completed the trip in about a year. By the time The Dalai Lama returned, in May 1955, the Chinese had already made arrangements for a parallel administrative setup to bypass the Tibetan Government. It was called the Preparatory Committee for the Autonomous Region of China. Dalai Lama was appointed its chairman. About the committee the Dalai Lama writes in his biography, “The committee was powerless—a mere façade of Tibetan representation behind which all the effective power was exercised by the Chinese. In fact, basic policy was decided by another body...it had no Tibetan members.....I saw that the Chinese had only made me chairman in order to give an added appearance of Tibetan autonomy to their schemes.”¹³

By 1955 the Chinese had started implementing their policies in Kham. This led to unrest with the population there. When the Chinese repression increased; the Khampas started arriving in Lhasa. In this manner Lhasa came to know about the repression in Kham. Between all that turmoil Dalai Lama visited India for Buddhist celebrations.

Dalai Lama's 1956 Trip to India

Dalai Lama visited India in 1956 on the occasion of celebrating the 2,500 years of birth of the Buddha. He was allowed to go after much deliberation by the Chinese authorities in Tibet. In India he was received with much warmth. He could differentiate between Nehru and Gandhi. "Although the mantle of Mahatma Gandhi had fallen on him, I could not catch any glimpse of spiritual fervor in him."¹⁴

While in India, Dalai Lama was thinking of remaining in India and not to return to Tibet. His brothers and other family members were also in India. They were also of the same opinion. They feared about his safety. His brothers had not informed him that they were in contact with Americans to help them challenge the Chinese with weapons. They as well as many Tibetans: which included many Tibetan high officials were of the opinion that the only way left to face the Chinese effectively, was to confront them with weapons. Dalai Lama expressed his desire to Nehru that he was thinking of not returning to Tibet. Nehru bluntly told him that India would not give any help to him. He also persuaded him to return to Tibet.

He had more reason to do so. The Chinese were initially not keen on allowing the Dalai Lama to visit India. India government had tried its best to change that opinion. If Dalai Lama did not return then the blame would come on it. May be Nehru informed Zhou En-Lai about it. He made two visits to India when the Dalai Lama was here. The purpose of his visits was to convince Dalai Lama to return to Tibet. He assured Dalai Lama to look into his grievances. He assured him that the Chinese government had no intention to hasten the reforms in Tibet. Nehru met Dalai Lama again with a copy of the Seventeen Point Agreement to tell him to

talk to the Chinese to implement it. Although it was clear to all that the Chinese were not committed to follow the agreement.

At that time Dalai Lama was also preparing for his religious examination that he was supposed to pass. In Tibet the Chinese had become more and more demanding. On the other hand the Tibetans were not at all happy with the Chinese. It was a very difficult situation for the Dalai Lama to handle. Up to then he had maintained peace in Lhasa with much difficulty. To think of returning to Tibet was naturally a depressing thought. But the response from the Indian side was not encouraging. At the same time he knew that if the Tibetans did not follow the Chinese then they would surely suppress any rebellion with all their might and many lives would be lost. Dalai Lama was convinced that it was not a practical idea to confront the Chinese with arms. He was of the opinion that in case of an open conflict the Chinese would finally succeed in suppressing them.

Deep at heart he had a good opinion about all human beings and hoped against hope that it might be possible to make the Chinese see reason and implement the agreement they had entered into with the Tibetans. Buddhism declares that nothing is permanent. He was hopeful that the Chinese would also not remain in Tibet forever. He was opposed to wars where men kill fellow human beings. Tibetans had full faith in him and he felt it was his duty not to leave them at that juncture. Without him there was all the possibility of Tibetans being crushed by the Chinese. Finally he decided to return to Tibet via Kalimpong. The Chinese had asked him to go straight to Tibet. He first went to Kalimpong. There he twice took the opinion of the oracle. Both the times he was asked to return to Tibet.

To return to Tibet was a big risk and one would shudder to think what would have happened if he could not have left Tibet in 1959. In Tibet only chaos awaited him; "I had to drag myself back to the world of politics, hostility, and mistrust,"¹⁵ recalled Dalai Lama. He returned to Tibet in the interest of Tibet and afterwards left Tibet in 1959 in the interest of Tibet. From the young age of fifteen the maturity with which he handled the Chinese was a remarkable feat by any standards. On way to Tibet he found that the Chinese promise of conciliation was not true. The Chinese had poisoned to death his trusted defence minister.

When Dalai Lama had left for India the trouble in Kham and Amdo had already begun. By the time Dalai Lama returned the unrest of the Tibetans had spread further and the Chinese had to publicly accept it. Dalai Lama was still convinced that violence was not the best course to follow. He wondered what would have been the advice of Mahatma Gandhi, whose Samadhi he had visited in Delhi, "Would he still have advised nonviolence? I could only believe he could."¹⁶ But the Chinese actions forced the Khampas and the Amdoas to take to arms.

The Khampa Rebellion

In the early fifties the Chinese decided to bring the Khampas under their firm rule. The Khampas always loved freedom. Even before the Chinese had arrived they always resisted orders from Lhasa. They were in no mood to accept Chinese domination. The Chinese were equally determined to assimilate Tibet within China and for doing so they had to subdue any resistance. May be they knew that the Khambas were the most difficult to deal with. But they had to start somewhere; and it was better to start in the eastern part which was adjoining China and then move to Lhasa. They systematically demoralized the leaders of the society and developed hatred within sections of the society. The poor were encouraged and paid for speaking against the rich. The property of the rich was confiscated and they were humiliated.

Political leaders were killed. In various cases children were forcibly sent to China. Even one or two year old children were sent. If the parents did not agree they were tortured. Adamant women were regularly raped. Rich were supposed to give wealth for the good of the community. Those who were suspected of hiding it were tortured in front the villagers. Beggars were made soldiers and were expected to punish the rich who were not listening to the Chinese officers. Tibetan women were forced to marry Chinese men. Those who showed more respect for religion than to communism were shot dead to make it clear to the people as to what was expected of them. Lamas were tortured, insulted and

made to live with women. Monasteries were defiled. Statues of gods were thrown in the river. The Chinese were ready to go to any extent to bring the Khampas to submission.

The Chinese had waited for a few years. But eventually they wanted the Tibetans to take to the communist ways. The land of the monasteries was to be given to the cooperatives. The lamas were expected to work on the fields. It was not considered proper for so many lamas not to work for their living. Private land was to be amalgamated into the cooperatives. Chinese settlers were coming into their areas. Cost of living had increased by ten times. The Tibetan feared that their religion, culture and other institutions were going to be destroyed. They resisted the moves of the Chinese. The Chinese ruthlessly crushed any resistance that came in their way. Thousands of Tibetans fled from Kham and Amdo to Lhasa. These reforms were coming too fast and were a challenge to the way of life of the people in Kham. The Chinese had not kept their promise of not interfering in the affairs of the Tibetans. The people rose in revolt.

In the beginning of 1956 Khampas attacked the Chinese garrison in Lithang in eastern Tibet. Many Chinese were killed. The attackers went in hiding in the Jungles. They started attacking the Chinese convoys headed for Lhasa. In Lithang the Chinese bombed by air the main monastery. The Chinese were not going to let go of the opportunity they had got of absorbing Tibet. Never before in history had the Chinese been in control of Tibet as then.

“Shortly after seizing the monastery, the Chinese brought two elderly lamas, former abbots, before the other captives. It was obvious, they announced, that the lamas were charlatans, for they had been unable to save the lives of their friends and relatives, and the time had come to see if they possessed the ability to save even their own lives. Boiling water was poured over the head of one of them, and then he was strangled; the other was stoned and then clubbed on the head with an ax. There were many such instances. During the next few weeks other lamas were crucified, incinerated, disemboweled, or buried alive in full view of groups of horrified Tibetans. A few were simply locked up and left to starve to death.

After being questioned closely, the other captives were released with a warning. In the mountains surrounding Lithang

there remained over a thousand Tibetans committed to avenging the deaths of their people and ridding their country of the godless Chinese.”¹⁷ Throughout Kham the Khampas took their guns and took to the jungles. They fought the Chinese. The Chinese at times bombed them in the jungles. Their ladies supplied them with meals. They fought boldly, but finally they ran short of arms. Many had died fighting the Chinese. Those who remained were rounded up and put in jails with hard labour and minimum food. Most of them were starved to death. Thousands of men and women died of starvation and atrocities inflicted deliberately to kill them.

It did not take long for the tales of atrocities of the Chinese to reach far and wide. The tales reached Lhasa and Kalimpong in India. The subjugation of Tibet was not going to be one without resistance. The brave Khampas, Amdoas and other Tibetans were going to show that they were second to none in bravery and sacrifice when it came to save their liberty and culture. The Khampa rebellion will be written in golden words in the history of Tibet. The Khampas fought the Chinese as bravely as any guerillas else where in the world. With relative ease the Chinese had succeeded in capturing Tibet in 1950. From 1956 onwards the Chinese were going to face a stiff challenge from the Tibetans. In 1950 the Tibetans were confused and the events took them over all of a sudden. But once the Chinese showed their true colours and the worst fears of the Tibetans had come true; the Tibetans were not going to allow the Chinese to get away with their misdeeds unchallenged.

The most important name in the long list of brave guerrillas who fought the Chinese is that of Gompo Tashi Andrugtsang. He was a successful Khampa businessman. He traded in goods with India and had many trade agents in and around Kalimpong. He lived in Lhasa. The tales of Chinese savagery reached him there. The Chinese had treated the Tibetans too badly and he was not going to take it lying down. He was determined to give them a bloody nose. Very soon Khampas were meeting at his residence to plan their moves. They called their organization Chushi Gangdrug. He tried to make the Tibetan government interested in their fight with the Chinese but did not succeed. He contacted the CIA to get help for his cause but the latter wanted the request to come from the Tibetan government. For various reasons that was not possible. But the contacts then made were instrumental in CIA taking upon

itself to train some Tibetans in guerrilla warfare. For the rest he decided to rely on his own resources. Two brothers of the Dalai Lama were also in contact with the CIA. Actually Nehru was the stumbling block who would never agree to any interference from the Western world.

Many Tibetans came forward to fight the Chinese. They brought their own arms. The rest were supplied arms by Gompo Tashi. He moved his operation base to Drigu Thang in Lhoka, southeast of Lhasa. He successfully captured the arms of the Tibetan government. The Chinese had warned the government before hand. That irritated the Chinese no end. The Chinese and guerrillas had many skirmishes. Guerrillas fought bravely and inflicted much more casualties on the Chinese than they received from them. All efforts of the Chinese failed to capture Gompo Tashi. The daredevil Tashi was so near and yet so far from the reach of the Chinese. In spite of all their efforts they could not catch him.

The Chinese had expected the Tibetan government to help them in Kham and expected help to fight many thousand of Tashi's men in and around Lhasa. The Tibetan government refused. They were the freedom fighters of Tibet. The Chinese government wanted the Chushi Gangdruk to cease its operations in central Tibet. "A series of eight messages were sent to Lhoka, the last of which was delivered by a delegation of five government officials headed by Tsepon Namseling and bore the official seal of the Dalai Lama.....Having delivered the messages, the Namseling and the four other delegates chose not to return to Lhasa. Instead, they joined the Chushi Gangdrug."¹⁸ All that could only spoil the already strained relations further.

The Chinese had faced resistance for so long that their relations with the Tibetan government had reached a stage of no return. The Tibetan government was also enquiring as to what help Chushi Gangdrug could provide in the event of further deterioration of the relations. There was hint of Dalai Lama leaving Lhasa. Chushi Gangdrug was ready to arrange for safe passage for His Holiness in case he planned to leave Lhasa. A big part of Eastern Tibet was under the control of the guerrillas. Thousands of Tibetans had converged on Lhasa in the last few years and the situation was grim by the end of 1958. There was scarcity of food. Many Tibetans from Lhasa had joined the guerrilla forces in the

mountains. In central Tibet the Chinese had gathered ten thousand soldiers at Tsethang. Chushi Gangdrug regularly attacked them.

In the beginning of 1959, New Year (Earth-pig year) was celebrated with the usual pomp and show. In many ways it was similar to Diwali in India and New Year in the west. Thousands of Tibetans had descended on Lhasa. People took part in the festivities and enjoyed themselves for many days. The celebrations took place in the manner in which they were celebrated in years gone by. But the political situation had changed in the last few years. Fear was there in the atmosphere. The Chinese were simmering with anger because of the continuous harassment from the side of the guerrillas for some years. The situation was going from bad to worse. It was apparent that some big catastrophe was going to take place.

At that vital time had assistance reached Tibet from outside; the guerrillas would have made real gains for the Tibetans. But the outside world could not think of any substantial help because of objection from the side of Nehru. He was critical of their policies for many years. They were not in a position of helping Tibet without his cooperation. The same can be said regarding the situation in 1950. In that year Nehru had said that Tibet could not be saved. That was a careless statement. If the Chinese could be challenged in the late fifties then the situation was far more favourable for the Tibetans in 1950. There were no motor-able roads in Tibet and no airfields. Chinese would have faced logistic difficulties.

Best Chinese troops were employed in Korea. They were not acclimatized to high altitude of Tibet. The first Chinese troops that reached Lhasa were physically in very bad shape. "There can be little doubt that an organized resistance movement would have resulted in enormous losses being inflicted on the invaders. Furthermore, such an action would have forced the Communists to fight on two fronts simultaneously: against guerrillas in Tibet and United Nations forces in Korea. An organized guerrilla movement would have demonstrated that Tibetans were willing to fight and die to maintain their independence, making it difficult for most of the international community to feign confusion over Tibet's status when news of the invasion was brought to their attention."¹⁹ The Americans would have welcomed it as China would be fighting on two fronts rather than one. That was not to

be. In India Nehru only wanted to be left alone to bring order on the world scene. No help could be provided to Tibet. A situation favourable to India and Tibet was lost.

Actor on the World Stage

On the Indian side not much action was taking place in relation to Tibet. In the beginning of the fifties the Chinese were busy consolidating their position in Tibet. They did not give any trouble to India in the beginning. To Nehru it appeared that his China-policy was successful. He wrote to chief ministers on 2 August. 1952, "...I might add that at no time did I think that there was the slightest reason to expect any aggression of our northeastern frontier. A little clear thinking will show that it is frightfully difficult task for any army to cross Tibet and the Himalayas....nevertheless, we had to be on guard....we have taken steps accordingly."²⁰ Right up to the time of war with China in 1962, he kept on assuring the country that all necessary steps were being taken to safeguard the borders. On hind-sight we know that he was making irresponsible statements for many years. The fact was that hardly any steps were taken to safeguard the frontiers. Few steps, which were taken, were totally inadequate to meet the challenge.

The situation on the Indian border with China deteriorated with the passage of time. Nehru's inaction was responsible for that. Time and again, it was brought to the knowledge of Nehru that there was need to keep vigil on the border. And throughout he received information of the latest situation. There was no dearth of people who could see that Nehru was not paying the needed attention to the border issue. Dr Lanka Sundaram had drawn the attention of the government towards news of infiltrators crossing into India from the Himalayas. While replying in Parliament Nehru said, "Now, Dr. Lanka Sundaram gave some facts which rather surprised me....and referred to the existence of a note in the External Affairs Ministry in which it was mentioned that China was disinclined to accept the McMahon Line....I am in intimate touch this way and that way on the border, on both sides, and

these figures which he mentioned, so far as I am concerned are completely wrong, and far out from truth. Dr. Lanka Sundaram also referred to some maps and Chinese claims to suzerainty, and the McMahon Line and all that, I cannot speak for the Chinese Government, of course, what they may have in their minds or not.

But I know what has happened in the course of the last two or three years.It (frontier) is not an issue at all to be discussed.”²¹ We find what Nehru said was false and what Sundaram said was correct. The latter also referred to some leaflet of the External Affairs Ministry in which some thing was said about an undefined border. Nehru said it was regarding Indo-Burmese border. Sundaram insisted it was about Indian border. Again, what Sundaram said was correct. Nehru said, “If any such thing (invasion of India) takes place, we shall resist it. Why shout about it and why get afraid of it? I do not understand this outlook.”²² This was Nehru’s way of silencing others. He gave an impression as if he was bold and fearless. The facts proved otherwise.

When some member referred to the status of Tibet, Nehru said in the Council of States on Dec. 24, 1953, “I would say with a certain acquaintance with the position of Tibet during the last, let us say, 50 or 60 years or so that at no stage in Tibet’s history, to my knowledge —and I have studied it fairly carefully—was the suzerainty of China denied. Sometimes some Tibetan groups denied it. But no foreign country at any time ever denied the suzerainty of China over Tibet over the last many, many generations. That is the position. There is no doubt about it.”²³ These were all half-truths from Nehru. As he had become the self-appointed leader of the third world such talk would only create an impression as if China had some just claim over Tibet.

Some citizens in India wanted to make people aware about the happening in Tibet to the discomfort of Nehru. He wrote to Balvantray Mehta, General Secretary of AICC on Aug.24, 1953, “....Obviously, no Congressman should join such committee or participate in the observation of ‘Tibet Day’. This is an unfriendly act to China and is against the policy we have pursued during these years. There was absolutely no reason for observing such a day now. I really do not understand why Professor Ranga or the others should suddenly decide to observe this day.”²⁴

A committee was set up in New Delhi on 22 August to observe 'Tibet Day'. It was to organize meetings and pass resolutions expressing sympathy for the people of Tibet in their 'temporary subjugation' and warning the people in India of the 'danger that lurks on India's borders' by the presence of Chinese troops in Tibet. There was nothing wrong in doing so. But Nehru could not understand why Ranga wanted to celebrate it. Nehru had decided to close his eyes in the matter of Tibet.

Mr. Kapur, who was India's Political Officer, (1952-55) did not show much faith in Panchsheel and his sympathy was with the Tibetans. Nehru made it clear that India could not do anything in the matter of Tibet. "I can quite understand that many people in Tibet have been disappointed at the agreement between us in China over Tibet.....We became the inheritors of British imperialism to a slight extent....Whatever happens in Tibet proper is beyond our reach. We can neither help nor hinder it.....We must remember that Tibet has been cut off from the world for a long time and, socially speaking, is very backward and feudal. Changes are bound to come there to the disadvantage of the small ruling class and the big monasteries.I can very well understand these feudal chiefs being annoyed with the new order. We can hardly stand up as defenders of feudalism."²⁵

Instead of being grateful to the British who had made Indian border safe; Nehru found fault with them. The country was going to pay dearly for his irresponsible attitude. He wanted to give an impression as if the Chinese were correct in challenging the old order in Tibet. Up to the time the Tibetans had not come in the clutches of the Chinese, he was interfering in one way or the way. Once the Tibetans were in the grip of the Chinese, his every effort was to ignore the existence of Tibet.

The happenings in Tibet were an unwanted interference in the way of Nehru. He wished to be left free to work for world peace. He was proud of what he was doing in Korea. Some thought otherwise. Acharya Kripalani said that we should not have gone to Korea and we should not have referred the Kashmir matter to the United Nations. But Nehru was determined to have a say in the world affairs. In parliament he said on 24th Dec. 1953, "We accepted the job and I would accept it not once, but a hundred

times again, because I owe a duty not only to my country but to others,"²⁶

His illusions about his role on the world stage knew no bounds. "The compulsion of events or, if you like, some conspiracy of fate or circumstances had forced us to become actors on the world stage.....May I say, in this connection, that some times people outside this country discuss with some warmth the question as to how far India is, as they put it assuming the leadership of some part of Asia, how far would I, in my capacity as the spokesman of India in regard to foreign affairs, represent Asian opinion."²⁷ He had no wish to speak about Tibet where we had so much at stake and he went on and on speaking about Korea. Nehru was speaking in the house of the People on 23Dec.1953.

He would speak about country after country. He would speak about Kenya, Bermuda, Gold Coast, Nigeria, Uganda, Sudan and what not. He knew what was good or bad there. Only he did not understand the effect of his deeds in Tibet. Kripalani spoke against his Korea policy. Nehru knew how to cut him short. "Now that is my difficulty, that in this changing dynamic world honourable Members opposite do not catch up to events. They still live in a past age, a good age, a very good age, but not of today, without attempting to face the different problems of today. The language, the arguments and the slogans and the reasoning of yesterday do not apply today. It is obvious. It is a patent thing. Yet the same old things are said, the same old arguments are trotted out, whether they have any reference to the discussion or not."²⁸

Nehru did not like the speech of C.G.K.Reddy. So he said, "He said many things which to some extent answer themselves, because he has the habit, in the course of a few sentences, of contradicting himself many times."²⁹ Although what the members were saying was correct, he did not like being criticized. "Nehru's sallies were often touched with contempt for his opponents- 'infantile', 'childish' were favourite words of rebuke for them."³⁰

In a letter to the Chief Ministers dt.1Dec.1953 he revealed his mind. "None of these (problems) are of any great consequence once we recognize the sovereignty of China in Tibet. What is of essential consequence is our frontier and by that we will stand."³¹ Unfortunately, he could not even protect the borders. He had forgotten all about the autonomy of Tibet.

That was his conviction. From the very beginning he had calculated that if he accepted Chinese sovereignty over Tibet; all would end well. In the early fifties China was not in a position to start a quarrel with India as it was busy consolidating its position in Tibet. This created an illusion in Nehru that his China policy was a great success. As such there was nothing to stop him from playing his role in world politics. So far no conflict had taken place on the border. But soon it would become clear that he was not capable of safeguarding either Indian or Tibetan interests. Neither would Tibet retain its autonomy nor India a secure border.

Nehru was wasting precious years in policing the world. He was neglecting the protection of the borders. G.B.Pant wrote to him drawing his attention towards the need of developing roads in frontier areas. He sent a note to the Secretary General and Foreign Secretary on 20th Feb. 1954, "I am particularly interested in roads, because without the roads nothing else can really be done."³² He sent the note to satisfy Pant. Otherwise he had no interest in building the roads. For years to come there would be no roads that Pant was demanding.

Not roads but his brainchild Panchsheel was going to save the country. To the Parliament he told on 15th May 1954, "The major thing about this agreement to which I would like again to draw the attention of the House is the preamble to that Agreement. I shall read the preamble.....I imagine that if these principles were adopted in the relations of various countries with each other, a great deal of the trouble of the present day would probably disappear."³³ Leave aside the disappearance of the trouble of the whole world actually Indian trouble was just going to start. He made it clear that there was nothing new about the position of Tibet. The only important thing to take note of was Panchsheel; which was his answer for all the ills of the world.

To him Tibet was some distant nightmare and Korea was just by his side. "Indeed, we are even more intimately concerned (in Korea and Indo-China)-if I may say so —because of our geographical proximity with Indo-China.....In a sense the fate of Asia depends a good deal on what happens in Indo-China or Korea."³⁴ He had hardly changed in the last three years. He was

convinced that the future of the world depended on his deeds or misdeeds.

Israel attacked Egypt by the end of 1956. Nehru would not tolerate this. He wrote to Eden, "It seems to us that this is a clear aggression and a violation of the United Nations Charter. For us in India and, I believe, in many other countries of Asia and elsewhere this is a reversion to a previous and unfortunate period of history when decisions were imposed by force of arms by western powers on Asian countries. We had thought that these methods were out of date and could not possibly be used in the modern age."³⁵ But the same Nehru in the case of Tibet was silent about decisions being imposed by force of arms by China. The latter had clearly said that Tibet was to be absorbed at all costs.

For the time being Nehru could engage himself in saving the world. His own impression was that many countries were acting on his advice and he was on seventh heaven, "I have been watching with restrained pride and pleasure as well as an ever growing sense of responsibility and humility, the growth of India's prestige in the world....and the facts are compelling the world to give a new status and position to India in the larger scheme of things."³⁶ As if the countries of Asia were foolish, who could not see his weakness in Tibet!

But he had his supporters. Zhou En-Lai was in Delhi in 1954. He kept Nehru happy. "Above all, a clever flatterer, Zhou concealed his personality and sought Nehru's advice on all matters."³⁷ Zhou said to Nehru, "Your Excellency has more knowledge about the world and Asia than I have. I am not being modest. Your Excellency had participated much more in international affairs than I have. We have been shut up in our own country dealing with our own human problems."³⁸ Krishna Menon was not far behind. For him Nehru was the greatest man of the world. "He is the greatest man in Asia today, may be in the world."³⁹ Such flattery ensured a place in the union ministry for him.

It irritated him when the Americans did not listen to him. "Americans carried their politics and their peculiar outlook on the world where ever they went, and these were becoming more and more irritating."⁴⁰ Or "Americans seem to imagine that every problem can be solved if there is enough talking and shouting

about it.”⁴¹ He himself never went beyond rhetorics in safeguarding Indian borders.

He found fault with the Arabs. “Egyptian or indeed Arab politics appear to me to be extra ordinarily immature and wrapped up in their petty problems with little understanding of what is going on in the world. When I met Nasser, I was attracted to him; he is a likable person. When I read a little book of his, I felt disappointed, that is, in regard to his intellectual calibre.”⁴²

Nehru saw trouble through out the world and could see the world war as a distinct possibility. Unfortunately, he was oblivious to the situation as it was developing on the Indian border. With the passage of time the boundary between India and China would become the most complex issue to defy solution.

Boundary Dispute

As already stated nothing was done to improve communications and other facilities on U.P. border. The state government there was bringing it to the notice of Nehru again and again. And he would reply as if he was aware of his responsibility. He wrote to the Sec. Gen. on 12th May 1954, “I also agree that we should establish check posts at all disputed points, wherever they might be, and our administration should be right up to these borders. This matter had been delayed and we should try to expedite it. Thus, the U.P. Government has written to us frequently about their problems in the Tibet border and, more especially, about the development of communications to that frontier.”⁴³ That was where the matter ended for Nehru. Nothing was done and within a few months China encroached upon territory in U.P. For some time China must had been trespassing in that area and the U.P. Government must have felt that there was something wrong. That’s why they were pressing the central government again and again. The central government did not move. The Chinese moved in. That was only the beginning.

Boundary with China was vague and except in Sikkim was not marked on ground. Nehru made the whole issue more complicated. "We should simply refer to our frontier. Indeed the use of the name McMahon is unfortunate and takes us back to the British days of expansion. All our old maps dealing with this frontier should be carefully examined and, where necessary, withdrawn. New maps should be printed showing our Northern and North Eastern frontier without any reference to any 'line'. These new maps should also not state there is any un-demarcated territory.....Both as flowing from our policy and as a consequence of our agreement with China, this frontier should be considered a firm and definite one which is not open to discussion with any one...It is necessary that the system of check-posts should be spread along this entire frontier. More specially, we should have check-posts in such places as might be considered disputed areas."⁴⁴

He had firmly put it that McMahon Line was the frontier. Then he did not even want the name to be mentioned. Government actually had a very small map of the McMahon Line that could not give any idea as to where the border lay. Right up to 1962 detailed maps were not available. Nehru did not want to define the border with the Chinese. And mostly the border was not marked on land. This was only a recipe for conflict. At the same time he claimed that the border was firm. How could we have a firm border if it not marked on the ground?

Except the Aksai Chin Road the Chinese had not encroached further in Ladakh up to 1956. India's inactivity encouraged them to encroach further. "Except the north-eastern Aksai chin area which the patrol parties had not visited, no sign of Chinese infiltration was noticed anywhere up to 1956. In fact, a patrol party going to Lanak La in June, 1956, found that the flag put up there by a party in 1954 was still flying though very much battered due to weather. But on August 29 that year, for the first time, a patrol party saw signs of a Chinese survey party having come up to Mebdo La, about two marches from Lanak La, in Indian territory.....In September they were at a nala called Zulung Khongma and at Chhuzungpo Kongma.

In 1956 minor skirmishes took place in Himachal Pradesh. In September 1956, tension erupted in the Shipki La area on the Himachal Pradesh-Tibetan border, following exchange of fire

between Indian and Chinese police in that region.”⁴⁵ This should have alerted Nehru to the border problem. He only sulked. Nehru kept it a closely guarded secret. He knew how to keep the issue in cold storage. “I was sitting with the same officer when he told his private secretary to put certain papers in the ‘border file’. I asked what ‘border file’ meant. He explained that since the Ministry of External Affairs refused to entertain information about China’s inroads into Indian territory, this was straight away filed. Nehru got enraged even at the mention of a border dispute with China.”⁴⁶

Instead of facing the challenge squarely, Nehru would only find some argument why not to act. “Nehru’s concern at the persistence with which the Chinese showed on their maps delineations which incorporated large parts of India in China was also alleviated by his conviction that, for a considerable time to come, China would be too preoccupied internally to indulge in any aggression against India. (Nehru to Foreign Secretary, 12 May, and remarks at Commonwealth Prime Ministers conference, 2 July 1956).....Curiously, the reported presence of Chinese personnel in Aksai Chin, and the defiance of Indian Sovereignty that this implied, roused no marked reaction in Delhi..... ‘I am worried more about the Naga trouble.’”⁴⁷ When the Chinese were constructing the Aksai chin road, Nehru would not stop them. In the Rajya Sabha he assured the members in a most irresponsible manner, “There was not ‘the remotest chance of a remote chance’ of India having any kind of military conflict with Russia or China.”⁴⁸

Chinese went on encroaching into Indian border. “Chinese troops occupied Khurnak fort in Ladakh and China Pictorial once more published a small-scale map showing a large part of north-eastern India, some areas in Uttar Pradesh and considerable portions of eastern Ladakh within the ‘approximate borders of China.’) Apart from registering an official protest Nehru did nothing. He repeated in Parliament (Lok Sabha, 4th Sept. 1958) that the boundary was a firm one requiring no more than a few minor adjustments.....it is a fixed thing, there is nothing to talk about.”⁴⁹ The MPs were mostly ignorant about the Chinese encroachments and the protest notes which Nehru was sending to them. And what he was calling a firm boundary; was being constantly changed by the Chinese and the parliament kept in the dark about these developments.

If the Chinese were advancing and Nehru would not challenge them and also would not inform the country then what impression were the Chinese going to get? It was a clear signal that there was no obstacle in going on advancing. Nehru saw to it that the happenings on the border were not disclosed to the public or the Parliament.

From the beginning there were many encroachments on Indian border and Nehru could not retrieve a single inch from the Chinese. He would huff and he would puff and the matter ended there. "In August 1954 the Chinese created a border incident at a place called Bara-hoti in U.P. Chinese claimed that Barahoti (called Wuje by them) was Chinese territory."⁵⁰ "On 1 September these differences were extended to Shipki la the main and very clearly formed pass on the pilgrim route to Kailash and Mansarovar.... In both cases the Chinese were clearly in the wrong. It may be surmised that these were probing actions to test Indian reactions."⁵¹ "There was only one major incursion in the Walong sector of NEFA, in 1957."⁵² The very next year saw China making new claims. "In 1958 China published maps showing large tracts of Indian territory as Chinese (in China Pictorial)."⁵³ The only thing Nehru did was to conceal these developments from the country.

To the advantage of Nehru investigative journalism had not yet taken roots in India and it was easy to conceal misdeeds. The renowned journalist Kuldip Nayar had no idea of the road in 1957. "A senior officer in the Union Home Ministry told the author (Nayar) in early 1957 that there were vague reports of China building a road through Sinkiang."⁵⁴ Mankekar was convinced that the Indian government came to know of the road only in 1957, "New Delhi was unaware of the existence of the Aksai Chin road until the Chinese Government announced in September 1957 that the road would open to traffic the following month."⁵⁵ As the government had not told the whole truth, everybody had his own date about when the country came to know of the existence of the road.

It is amazing that when the Chinese were encroaching upon Indian territory, instead of checking them, Nehru projected them as our dear brothers. "Hindi Chini bhai bhai of 1950's had resulted in keeping in the dark the Indian public about the happenings on the border.....had he behaved boldly then China would not have

dared to go on encroaching upon Indian territory. But the degree of cowardice displayed by Nehru encouraged China to be rash in the matter of encroachment.”⁵⁶ That was also the time when he had illusions of his role in the world affairs.

Chinese could not have a better opportunity to grab Indian territory. Next year they advanced further. But they had so far not made any structures in the territory they were roaming about. They were probing the mind of Nehru and also if somebody else was there to challenge Nehru or them. When no signs of any resistance appeared, they knew they could proceed.

Intelligence chief Mullick could not bear the thought that China blatantly went on encroaching upon Indian territory. On his own he took some steps to do as best as he could. “Alarmed by this sign of Chinese penetration in our territory, next year (1958) we made more elaborate arrangements for the porters to go to the frontiers in all directions.....tell tale signs of fresh Chinese intrusions were foundthe southern most intrusions had taken the Chinese over seventy miles inside Indian territory.”⁵⁷ The Chinese were spreading out over many hundred square miles of Ladakh. They must have been surveying the terrain. Nehru did almost nothing. Only he claimed the Chinese to be still better friends. He continued making efforts to get them a seat in the United Nations right up to 1958. He made no efforts to make roads in the border areas. Without them it was impossible to protect those areas.

Mullick and his intelligence bureau were engaged in a futile exercise. His over enthusiasm led to another freak exercise called “Forward Policy” to which we will come later. No doubt he must have been implementing his plans with the blessings of Nehru. After all it was a major decision. But as Nehru had absolutely no heart in challenging the Chinese, Mullick or anybody else could not do much. In 1958 the Ministry of External Affairs under Nehru was not sure if the road was on Indian territory. He had always claimed that the boundary was well defined. Ministry of External Affairs had turned itself into Ministry of Sorry State of Affairs. India did not know up to where its territory was.

Nehru would have preferred to sleep on the issue but in 1958, the Chinese again disturbed his sleep by announcing to the world the existence of the road. Nehru had to find a way out. Two teams

were sent to confirm the location of the road. The first team, sent by the army, was led by one Lt. Iyengar. The Chinese took it prisoner at Haji Langar. It was detained in Sinkiang for two months. It had a wireless set which was out of order. So the team had no contact with the Head Quarters. The army was burdened by such worthless stores for years. Another team confirmed that the road was on Indian territory. What would Nehru do?

The Lethal Protest Notes

Was Nehru going to act? He knew another trick called "Protest Note". A protest note was sent to the Chinese regarding the road, which was duly rejected by the Chinese. Nehru took care to hide these developments from the people of India. Right up to 1962 the Chinese went on advancing and India went on sending protest notes. "As the Chinese moved further into Indian territory, both in the western and eastern sector, New Delhi fired protests at Peking with the rapidity of a machine-gun indeed, if protests were lethal missiles, China would have been crushed by their sheer weight and numbers."⁵⁸

He had the ability to find excuses for his inaction by giving queer replies. When he was questioned about the Chinese intrusions he replied, "These did not mean 'any kind of a fixed occupation' of Indian territory."⁵⁹ When there was a real possibility of the Chinese increasing their activities on the frontier Nehru's queer twist was, 'The real danger at the present moment is not of armies pouring in' but in words being issued from Peking."⁶⁰ Lt. Gen. Thorat also mentioned about them. "A few other violations took place and all these were duly reported to the government. Apart from sending 'strong protests' nothing else was done and sporadic violations continued."⁶¹

Nehru wrote a letter to Zhou En- Lai regarding the encroachments. "The purpose of the Nehru letter was....to have the Chinese confirm that their conception of the border was still not fixed.....Now the Chinese Prime Minister said clearly that, in

the view of his government, the Sino-Indian border was not a settled matter and that 'border disputes' do exist between China and India."⁶² The answer was not in conformity with what Nehru had been saying all those years. Up to the time the Chinese had not consolidated their position in Tibet they gave vague answers to India regarding the boundary between the two countries. Then they were in a position to take a firm stand. As usual Nehru was helpless to do anything.

Zhou En-Lai declared that the border had to be negotiated. "First of all, I wish to point out that the Sino-Indian boundary has never been formally delimited....As a provisional measure, the two sides temporarily maintain the status quo, that is to say, each side keep for the time being to the border areas at present under its jurisdiction and not go beyond them."⁶³ As Nehru had done nothing to safeguard the border, this was not a bad proposal. Earlier he had tried to keep the border issue vague. Now he could not deny that the border was never demarcated. Nehru maintained that the northern border should be considered a firm and definite one which was not open to discussion with anybody."

From the beginning he was reluctant to negotiations on the border issue. "Why the Indian Government saw re-negotiation as tantamount to giving up the McMahon Line is not clear."⁶⁴ Earlier, as well as now, for Nehru the border was a can of worms although he had claimed it to be definite. "The truth of the matter was that he knew that the border was open to all sorts of disputes. So it was better to keep the eyes closed to the reality. That was the real reason not to talk."⁶⁵ But that would not solve the problem. The sooner it was tackled the better. For Nehru the longer he could avoid the issue the better. Then the ground reality changed.

Nehru had not bothered to develop communication network. When he was busy policing the wrong doers of the whole world China was busy making roads. India's foreign policy was one man's show. It was Nehru's preserve. Mostly he did as he wished. Even otherwise his colleagues had no courage to contradict him. On the border question members of Cabinets Foreign Affairs Committee were of the opinion that the border issue needed a political decision (Pant, Morarjee, Menon, Shastri, A.K.Sen). But they had no courage to stand up to Nehru. So the situation went from bad to worse.

China had all the trump cards. The disputed road was far away from the reach of Indian troops. To defend that area, Indian troops would have to walk for weeks and weeks. It had no modern weapons. Then how many troops could India move? Road was with the Chinese. They could bring more troops speedily. If Zhou's proposal was not accepted then the Chinese could easily grab areas around the road. And the area they would grab would again be far away from the reach of Indian troops. Nehru was not ready for a compromise.

He went on convincing the country that China was our friend and that all steps were taken to protect the border. The people could not see his game and the country paid for it. The Chinese only understood him better and took advantage of the situation. By the beginning of 1959 the situation in Tibet had reached a flash point. On the Indian border the activities of the Chinese had increased. Conflict with the Chinese was not far away in Tibet as well as in India. The result of any conflict was a foregone conclusion.

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We can only send Further Reminders

Flight of the Dalai Lama

In eastern Tibet one hundred and fifty thousand Chinese troops were employed to check and bring under control the activities of guerrillas. China was determined not to let go of the best opportunity it had got in history of subjugating Tibet. Quite often Dalai Lama had thought of resigning from his political position. But he could not do so in the interest of his country- men. His absence from the scene would have led to open confrontation between the Tibetans and the Chinese. He was convinced that the brutal superiority of the Chinese forces would finally have the upper hand and the Tibetans only would eventually suffer if any confrontation took place.

In the beginning of 1959 Dalai Lama was to take his final religious exams. About that time the Chinese General in charge of Lhasa approached him and after greeting him for the New Year informed of the arrival of a dance party from China. The dance party could have performed any where for the convenience of Dalai Lama; but the stage lighting was the best at the Chinese Army Head Quarters. At the suggestion of the Chinese general, Dalai Lama readily agreed to attend the performance at the Army Head Quarters. He had not at all suspected the motives of the Chinese. For him it was simply a matter of watching a dance performance. But the ordinary Tibetans did not think so. They had never trusted the Chinese. In the last few years their worst fears had surfaced. Chinese could not be their friends.

Chinese wanted to have a fixed date for the Dalai Lama's visit to the army headquarters. 10th of March was fixed for the show. On 9th the Chinese communicated to the head of his body-guards that the latter should go for the show without them. At the most a few unarmed body- guards could be allowed. The Chinese also wanted to keep the visit secret and did not want the usual

formalities that went with the movement of Dalai Lama. In the light of the fact that the relations between the Chinese and the Tibetans were strained and that both suspected the moves of the other; the Chinese demands seemed unusual to the Tibetans.

Rumours spread in Lhasa that the Chinese wanted to kidnap Dalai Lama. Tibetans could not bear to think of such a thing happening. He was their life and soul. They surrounded his residence to prevent him from going out. In the surcharged atmosphere those Tibetans who seemed to be on the side of the Chinese were mishandled. One man was killed. In that surcharged atmosphere the crowd demanded them to leave Tibet. For years the Tibetans had suppressed their anger and that came into open. The restraint on both the sides was giving way to open confrontation. In spite of assurances from the side of the Dalai Lama that he was not going to the Chinese camp, the people did not leave his residence.

Dalai Lama sent his representatives to calm down the Chinese. But they behaved in an arrogant manner with them. The façade of politeness was crumbling fast. On 11th March itself Dalai Lama consulted the oracle as to whether he should remain in Lhasa or leave for some other place. It was suggested that he should remain where he was. Day by day the relations between the two sides deteriorated. The Chinese were assembling more troops and the Tibetans were in no mood to listen to them. Dalai Lama again consulted the oracle and was asked to remain in Lhasa. He got news that the Chinese were going to use guns. It became clear that they were determined to do so. On the 17th the oracle was again consulted. This time, the oracle advised him to leave Lhasa that very day. The former also put the details of the route the latter was to take to reach the border with India. Dalai Lama is convinced that the oracle was clear for a long time as to when he should leave Lhasa and deliberately the instructions to leave were given on the last day. That very day, two shots from Chinese guns fell near Norbulingka, the residence of Dalai Lama. That settled the issue.

Time had come for him to leave Lhasa and Tibet. Although, it was not easy to do so! The Chinese were keeping watch on his movements. There was great risk in leaving Lhasa. But He had

decided to leave. It was apparent that he could not do much from inside Tibet. May be from Indian soil he could muster support from the outside world for his people. He was to leave with his family members and a few others. Most of this description is from the autobiography of the Dalai Lama. He had disclosed his plans to some of the leaders. That very night he left his palace disguised as an ordinary soldier with one of his men. There was a crowd outside the palace but he was not stopped. The others had left earlier. They were all to meet at some distance from the city. Finally it was a party of about a hundred persons.

Soon thereafter they met freedom fighters. They had taken the responsibility for the safety of the party. The party was to move in southern Tibet, which was under the control of the freedom fighters. Soon two C.I.A. trained Tibetans also joined the party. One of them carried a transmitter and was constantly in touch with his bosses. The journey was very difficult and there was ice everywhere. After a week the party reached Lhuntse Jong, where, in front of a thousand Tibetans Dalai Lama repudiated the Seventeen Point Agreement and declared himself the legitimate government of Tibet. Then the party moved on towards the Indian border.

At Lhuntse Jong Dalai Lama selected a few persons to move fast to the Indian border and meet some Indian government officers to seek permission for the party to enter India. After getting the necessary permission these persons met Dalai Lama at the border and informed him that the permission was granted. As per the C.I.A. operatives with the party, they had informed their bosses who had in turn made arrangements with the Indian government for asylum and safe entry of Dalai Lama's party into India.¹ He reached India on 31st of March 1959. Soon thereafter about one hundred thousand Tibetans followed him to India.

In India he was received with much warmth. He was handed a telegram from the Indian Prime Minister, Jawahar Lal Nehru. He had welcomed Dalai Lama. This is one act for which he can be always remembered. Some say that because of this act the relations between India and China deteriorated. This opinion is based on ignorance. In India there were numerous people who had immense love and respect for Dalai Lama. This was real and was not the

result of any political expediency. In spite of its best efforts India had failed to win friendship of China and the latter was encroaching upon Indian territory since 1954 if not earlier.

After a few days Dalai Lama reached Tezpur, where he gave a brief description of the situation in Tibet. This was the final outcome of the peaceful liberation of Tibet. Nehru had also played a role in it and had claimed in 1950 that he did what he did so that the Tibetans could get the best terms from the Chinese. What they finally got was aggression and suppression. Dalai Lama was hopeful of returning to Tibet some day. But alas! The way to freedom is a long and uncertain one.

Was India going to act in its own interest and in the interest of Tibet? If Nehru had any real misgivings about the mind of the Chinese, he had now the opportunity to show that in the changed circumstances in the light of the developments that had taken place; he was capable of taking some bold steps. Alas! That was not to be. As usual he would almost do nothing. He would not repudiate the 1954 agreement with China. He would not recognize the Tibetan Government in exile. He had made it clear to Dalai Lama that he was not supposed to start any political activities from Indian soil.

Soon thereafter on 24th April Nehru met him. Dalai Lama told him that he had initially not planned to come to India but had planned to form a government in south Tibet. This irritated Nehru and he said that the Indian government would not have recognized such a government. To Dalai Lama it appeared as if he considered the former a youth who needed scolding at times. When he expressed his desire to work for the freedom of Tibet, it agitated Nehru so much that he thumped heavily on the table. Dalai Lama writes in his autobiography that perhaps he was feeling guilty for forcing him to go to Tibet in 1957. The former also realized that the way to freedom was not easy one.

When Nehru left, Dalai Lama felt a deep sense of despair. What else was Nehru capable of? Kennedy had termed Nehru's visit to America as "the worst head-of-state visit." As there was a lot of resentment in India regarding his Tibet-policy he tried to justify it with half-truths. "At that time (1950-51) there was no choice left to India but to recognize Chinese suzerainty. Indeed,

even the British Government had done that, and we could not go back upon it.”² He further wrote, “It has been a proud boast both in India and China, that these two great countries often with a common border, have not had any military conflict during the last two thousand years or more.” It was a ridiculous and absolutely wrong statement! Never before 1950 was China our neighbour. So there was no question of war before that. There was nothing to boast about.

General K. M. Cariappa suggested confronting the Chinese on the borders. That was the only effective and age-old course to take. But Nehru knew more than what one of India’s best-known general was suggesting, “Wars are not fought in this adventurous way; nor are preparations for a possible conflict so made.”³ Kennedy had found speaking to Nehru like “Trying to grab something, only to have it turn out to be just fog.”

As he had done before he would not support Tibet at the UN. “On 12 October 1959, the UN General Assembly took up for consideration its earlier recommendation to include the question of Tibet in the agenda. India’s representative abstained from voting for two reasons, which Nehru had earlier given in parliament. He had said that the UN could not accuse China of violating human rights in Tibet as the former was not allowed to be the member of the UN. Secondly, Tibet had not been acknowledged as an independent state for considerable time and because of this reason it could not become a member of the UN.... But about the latter statement of Nehru questioning the Independent status of Tibet, Dalai Lama said, ‘If you deny sovereign status of Tibet, you deny the validity of the Simla convention and therefore the validity of the McMahon Line.’ This statement quite understandably angered Nehru.”⁴ Even otherwise what business Nehru had of stopping the issue at the U.N. Earlier he had not supported the U.N. resolution in 1950 when Tibet was a free country.

There was no good reason for Nehru to interfere. And that too at a time when China had already encroached upon Indian territory. Clashes had taken place with the Chinese on the borders and Dalai Lama had already left Tibet. Some Indian pilgrims used to visit Kailash and Mansarover. China acted to stop them. “There

was the typical case of Brahmachari Atma Chaitanya who, when on his way to Kailash was searched and harried and compelled to sign a confession that the homeopathic medicines he was carrying were intended to poison the local people. All this was meant to convert Tibet into a forbidden land.”⁵

Throughout the world and particularly in India there was a lot of sympathy for Tibet. Many books were also published in that year in support of Tibet. But on the political sphere India hardly did anything that could help Tibet. Although in parliament Nehru was criticized for his policies all those years, it did not transform into any concrete action to help the cause of free Tibet. China did not like Indian support for and the respect shown to Dalai Lama. It did not show any restraint in putting the blame on India for the whole episode. As usual Nehru tried to play down the whole thing. In the parliament he said, “It is more a clash of wills than, at present, a clash of arms or a clash of physical bodies.”⁶ That very day; 17 March 1959, the Chinese had targeted the residence of Dalai Lama.

Upon the escape of Dalai Lama from Lhasa hell was let loose in Tibet by the Chinese. Within forty- eight hours of his escape they targeted the Tibetans who had risen in revolt against them. On 19th March 1959 Tibetan women held a demonstration in Lhasa. On 20th morning the Chinese targeted Norbulingka. Some Tibetans were targeting them with their antiquated weapons. All this was of no use in front of well- armed soldiers. Tanks and other army vehicles moved in the city. By 22nd the resistance was over. Thousands of Tibetan died fighting an uneven war. That is what the Dalai Lama had feared from the very beginning. “On the once-green grounds of the Norbulingka, on the terraced steps of the Potala, in the inner courtyard of the Jokhang Temple, on the rocky slopes of Chakpori hill, and in the cobble stoned streets of Lhasa, between ten and fifteen thousand Tibetans lay dead.”⁷

China had no love or sympathy for Tibetans. They had got the opportunity to absorb Tibet and they would not allow Tibetans to spoil their chance. The Tibetans were no match in front of the large and brutal force of the Chinese.

The Parliament Could Wait

With the hostility between the Chinese and the Tibetans coming into open, the relations between India and China deteriorated further. China was already encroaching upon Indian border. Then it became imperative for them to move fast as the trust between the neighbours had eroded and the designs of the Chinese had become clear to all. But as Nehru was totally incapable of taking any action against them he was forced to see them as friends. This suited them. They speeded up their activities on the border. Those activities were becoming more apparent after the events in Tibet. MPs also became more active.

On persistent enquiries from members, Nehru admitted in Lok Sabha on 28th August 1959, that the Chinese had established a camp near a place called Spanggur, well within our territory. In 1957, one major incident of incursion took place in NEFA. In 1959, three took place in NEFA and Ladakh. "China created three serious border incidents between August and October 1959.....On 7th August, 1959, about 200 Chinese violated our border at Khenzeman, north of Chutangmu, in Kameng Frontier Division.....later on the Chinese detachment withdrew and our forces established themselves."⁸ The second incident was at Longju. The Prime Minister informed the House, "The present incident I am talking about is a very recent one and in fact a continuing one. On the 25th a strong Chinese detachment crossed into our territory, in the Subansiri Frontier Division, at a place south of Migyitun and opened fire at a forward post of ours.

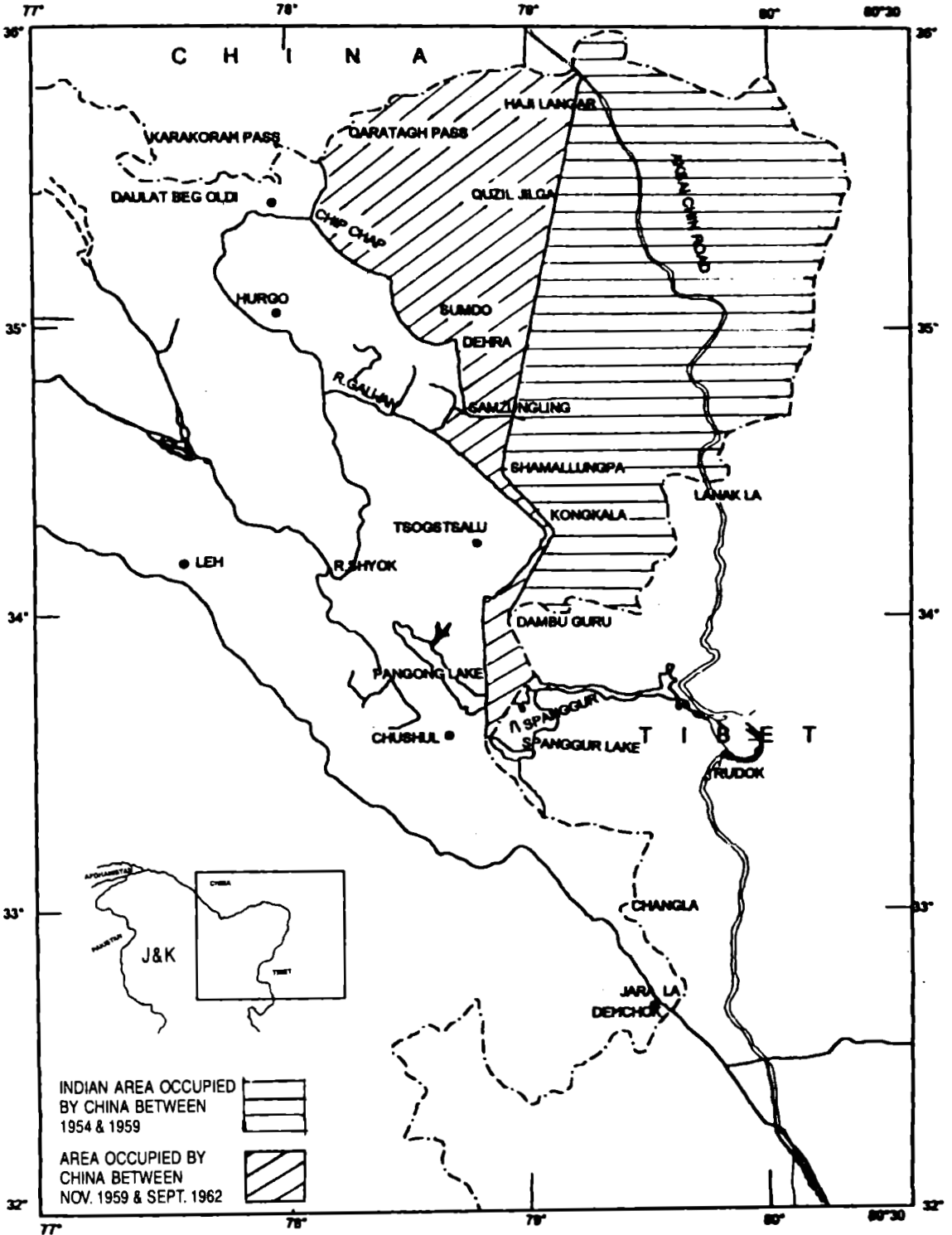
In June China had protested that we had violated their territory at MigyitunLongju is 5 days march from another post of ours.....called Limeking. Limeking is about 12 days march from the next place behind it. So in this way Longju is about 3 weeks from a road head. I merely mention this to give the House some idea of the communication, transport, distance and time taken.....The Chinese came again on 26th and opened fire...our people withdrew under overwhelming pressure."⁹ He was fond of telling again and again as to how far the forward areas were and how many days it took on foot to reach those areas. But those areas should have been connected by roads years back. Why was that not done? And still there seemed no sense of urgency to do the same.

Nehru further said that the border area of NEFA had been placed under the army, which till then was guarded by the Assam Rifles. This did not change the situation on the ground. "Handing over the borders to the Army was a meaningless gesture without the additional resources required"¹⁰ "General Thimayya, the Army Chief, had always warned government about the Chinese threats. He had informed the government of what would be required in men and material to contain them. He was dubbed pro-west by Mr. Menon and an alarmist by officialdom."¹¹

"The third major incident of 1959 took place in Ladakh by October end. The Chinese ambushed a police party, under Havildar Karam Singh, about 40 miles inside our territory, while it was on a routine patrol in the Chang Chenmo valley, south of Kongka pass....we lost 9 killed and 10 were taken prisoners."¹² Nehru had no intention of taking any action. "That the Chinese were nibbling at three points on the border concerned Nehru not so much in itself, but as an indication of aggressive behaviour on the part of the Chinese.....Nehru's view was that not only was the frontier with China not negotiable by India, but that China had accepted this and there was nothing to negotiate about."¹³ There was nothing to negotiate but China was left to encroach upon Indian borders. The Chinese had left no doubt about their intentions. In October 1959, Indian patrol party was stopped two miles west of Kongka Pass. The previous year the party could travel much beyond the pass. Now the Chinese claimed that they were present there since 1950.¹⁴

Nehru had written to Zhou about Chinese maps that showed Indian areas in China. After some delay the latter replied. The delay was termed as 'strange silence' by Nehru. "Nehru said publicly that the Chinese had recently maintained a 'strange silence' about them (offending maps).....The silence ended with the arrival of Premier Zhou En-Lai's reply, dated 8th September 1959. This document....maintained that the Chinese maps were substantially correct and claimed most of the Indian territory shown on them.....This revelation should have been less surprising than Nehru's sorrowful and injured reaction made it seem. The Indian Prime Minister argued that neither Zhou's January 1959 letter nor subsequent events had prepared him for the idea 'that the People's Republic of China would lay claim to about 40,000 square miles

MAP NO. 1 Chinese Encroachment upto November 1959 and Septemeber 1962.



of ... indisputably Indian territory.”¹⁵ This was the final outcome of Nehru’s Panchsheel and unbelievably queer idea of not discussing the border issue in 1953/1954.

Parliament was agitated by the way it had been kept in the dark for years together by Nehru regarding the happenings on the border. At least since 1954 China was creating problems regarding the borders with India. Nehru had hardly told anything to the Parliament about that. Kriplani said, “Our territory has been occupied, our people have been kidnapped, our guards have been fired at, taxes have been collected, roads have been built; all leading towards India; check and observation posts established along our borders.... But whatever aggression have been there so far, I regret to say that the country has been kept in ignorance of this aggression for a long period, even though many notes through the years have passed between the two countries. The Parliament itself has been kept in ignorance. Information about the aggression has been elicited through questions in this ... House. No information was ever given voluntarily. Even then, it has been meager and often the acts of aggression have been minimized sometimes, it would appear that there has been special pleading for the Chinese.”¹⁶ Kriplani was right. It is worth noting that the dealings with the Chinese up to that stage were deliberately kept secret and the nation was kept in the dark about the facts. Then an assertive Parliament and the gravity of the situation forced Nehru to reveal the facts.

Nehru informed the house that the Indian picket at Longju had run short of ammunition. As usual he had gone through the ritual of sending protest note to the Chinese. “We immediately protested to the Chinese government about it and took certain other steps which we thought necessary and feasible to strengthen our various posts in that area, Limeking and others. We have, in fact, placed the entire border area of NEFA directly under our military authorities.” He further said, “I need not say that, while I do not wish to take an alarmist view of the situation— in themselves these are minor incidents.... In any event, we have to be vigilant and protect our borders as best we can.” “We have to face here a particular situation. There is no alternative for us but to defend our country’s borders and integrity. Having said that, at the same time

we must not, as often happens in such cases, become alarmist and panicky and thereby take wrong action.” “We shall naturally be prepared for any eventuality and we shall keep vigilant without fuss or shouting.”

Even when he was forced by the Parliament to give information about the happenings at the border, he took the opportunity to mislead the house by giving false assurances. For one thing he had hardly done anything to protect the borders in the last nine years. And secondly his assurance given to the house that the borders would be protected was false, as he had no intention of doing much in the coming years to protect the borders. The facts speak for themselves. He had informed the House how distant the border was. But why was it so? It was decided way back in 1950 to construct roads up to the borders. But very few roads were constructed. Why were the forces not able to meet the Chinese forces effectively in 1959? The forces had not been provided with modern arms and other logistic support.

The tragedy was that neither did the roads reach up to the border nor were the forces equipped with the arms and ammunition they needed even at the time of war in 1962. There were very serious shortcomings in every area of preparation. It was clear that in spite of his assurances he had not done enough to protect the borders. So much so that the troops did not even have ammunition for rifles. But in his speech, he had time and again assured the House that he would defend the country's borders and integrity. He was making false promises. It is unbelievable that such things could happen. But such things continued to happen and were sure to lead to disaster.

Throughout Nehru's effort was to hide facts. Nehru spoke about some encroachment but did not speak of the Aksai Chin Road. Dr. R. S. Singh wanted to know if this was the only encroachment by the Chinese. Still Nehru did not inform the house about the Aksai Chin Road; which had been started four or five years back and completed two years back. And his reply was not straight. “There have been some frontier troubles in two or three places widely separated; and it would be hardly correct to say that our area is under occupation of the Chinese, that is, under any kind of fixed occupation.” It was a lie. The road was a fixed

occupation that he did not even mention. It was important to note that the Chinese never went back from any area that they occupied. As such all their occupations were fixed. What Nehru called *two or three places widely separated*; had grave consequences. Chinese had reached some points. If these points (places) were joined together then they were in possession of thousands of square kilometers of Indian territory.

It was only when he was directly questioned about the road that he accepted the existence of the road. "Almost to the end of August 1959 he had told parliament nothing at all about the boundary dispute with China or about the road that crossed Aksai Chin or about Peking's opposed approach to the whole question of boundary settlement-and for once the secret had been very well kept. It was not only a matter of secrecy; Nehru did not hesitate to mislead parliament when members picked up the scent of the boundary dispute.....On August 28th the chickens thus hatched came home to roost....word had also at last got out about the existence of the Chinese road across AksaiChin."¹⁷

Nehru further said, "The House will appreciate that these areas are extraordinarily remote, almost inaccessible, and even if they can be approached, it takes weeks and weeks to march and get there."¹⁸ Only Nehru could make such statement, without being removed from his post. If these areas were remote, who was responsible? Why roads were not made up to then? How was he going to defend the country, if means of communications had not been developed in border areas? How was he going to safeguard the borders in future? Nehru had no commitment for the future. Nehru had accepted that skirmishes had taken place with the Chinese a year ago and he had not informed the house about the same.

N.G. Goray responded, "Does it mean that in parts of our county which are inaccessible, any nation can come and build roads and camps? We just send our parties, they apprehend the parties and, because of our good relations, they release them. Is that all? The road remains there, the occupation remains there and we do not do any thing about it?"¹⁹

These were relevant questions. Nehru wondered if he had to reply to such questions! Nehru suggested that the location of the road had to be made clear. He spoke in a manner so that an

impression could be gathered as if the road might be two-three miles inside Indian territory. Actually at places it was one hundred kilometer inside Indian territory. Nehru had no plans to meet Chinese challenge. After the 1962 war with China Nehru would live to tell the Parliament that it took weeks and weeks to reach the border.

He was also a master at dodging unpleasant questions. In the discussion referred above, after Goray it was Atal Bihari Vajpayee who said, "The hon. Prime Minister just now said that if anyone occupies our territory, it is a challenge. May I know what positive steps are being taken, or have been taken, to enforce security measures on this border area?"

The Prime Minister: There are thousands of miles of border. The hon. Member should be a little more specific in his question. If he is referring to this particular corner, the Aksai Chin area that is an area about some parts of which, if I may say so, it is not quite clear what the position is. In other places, we are quite clear and certain. The border is 2,500 miles long. The reply was given in such a manner that the question remained unanswered. He did not answer if he would meet the challenge and how.

Dr. Sushila Nayar asked, "I would like to know if these troubles on the border are over the same areas of our territory which the Chinese had indicated as their territory in their maps."

The Prime Minister: The Chinese government's maps are on such a small scale and in such broad splashes that some parts of Ladakh appear to be included in them. But they are not accurate enough. What we are discussing, and the question which I have answered, relates to about two or three miles. Two or three miles are not visible in these maps. But it is a fact that part of Ladakh is broadly covered by the wide sweep of their maps.

By giving a guileful reply he dodged the question. It also suggested as if the dispute was for two-three miles. The question was also relevant because the Chinese were really occupying areas which they were claiming in their maps. It had become clear that they had no respect for the border as claimed by India.

Three days later on 31st August, 1959, while speaking in the Rajya Sabha Nehru refined his argument further. Three days earlier he had described the road to be in the *corner* of Ladakh. On 31st

August he said it was in *extreme corner* of Ladakh. He claimed that the Chinese had shown the road on a small map of 2.25x1.75 inches map. So it was not clear where the road was. But why he had to depend on them to show it to him on a big map as to where the road was? What was his government doing to protect the borders? What impression was the world going to get if the Prime Minister did not know whether the road was in his territory or not? What claim could he have on such territory?

D. P. Singh asked as to why the house was not taken into confidence earlier. Nehru replied, "There was not much to take into confidence about, Sir.....Without our knowledge they (the Chinese) have made a road in that extreme corner and we have been dealing with it through correspondence. No particular occasion arose to bring the matter before the House, because we thought that we might make progress by correspondence and when the time was ripe for it we would inform parliament."

China had encroached upon Indian territory and this was not enough reason for Nehru to take the country into confidence. Was he first expecting China to inform that it was going to make a road through northern Ladakh. He was waiting for a particular occasion to inform the country about encroachment taking place for the last five years. He would decide the right time for informing the country. He had taken the country for granted. Immediately on learning about the road he should have informed the country and taken steps to remove the encroachment. But he was not capable of doing so. His best was yet to come. Continuing the above referred discussion, Mr. D. P. Singh wanted the road to be bombed as Nehru had not got reply for his letter in more than a year. This Nehru refused to consider.

Mr. D. P. Singh: What are we to do when the Chinese government does not even answer our protest sent as far back as August or so?

The Chairman: The last was on November 8, 1958.

The Prime Minister: After that we sent them reminders to which they did not send an answer. That is true.

Mr. V. K. Dhage: In spite of reminders?

The Prime Minister: In spite of reminders. We can only send further reminders.²⁰

That was Nehru! His above referred reply may not find parallel in parliamentary history of the world. When China declared its intention of liberating Tibet, he developed cold feet. He had agreed to support the issue of Tibet at the U.N. At the last minute he stopped the Indian representative from doing so. He kept quiet when China attacked Tibet. He did not say any thing when the Chinese encroached upon Indian territory. It was agreed upon that the border issue would be discussed with them at the time of the trade agreement in 1953-1954. At the last minute he instructed the Indian team not to discuss the border. He went further and ordered the delegation to leave negotiations if the Chinese wanted to discuss the same.

For years together they went on grabbing Indian territory and he did not prevent them from doing so. It was a fact that Nehru was not capable of doing more than sending protest note. He had not prepared the country to face the Chinese challenge. At the same time he boasted that he would not allow them to keep a foot on his chest. He had said that not a blade of grass grew in that area. But the most important question was whether he was capable of protecting the area where grass grew? Unfortunately, he was not!

In the same debate a member asked if the building of the road had been stopped.

The Chairman: The road has been built, I think.

The Prime Minister: The road was built. Roads in these areas, Sir, are of a peculiar type. The only thing you have to do to build a road is to even the ground a little and remove the stones and shrubs.

When the whole world thought that China would be a problematic neighbour, Nehru claimed it to be the best friend. He declared that China would give no trouble. When it encroached upon Indian territory he hid the fact from the nation. Then he said that the Chinese map was too small to assert the fact. He said that the area of the road was disputed area. Earlier he had said that the border was a well defined one and not open to negotiation. Finally he was saying that the road building was not to be taken seriously as it was only a matter of removing some bushes and shrubs.

The country had shown full faith in Nehru and he on his part assured the country again and again that the borders were safe. After nine years it came as a rude shock to the people that the borders were not safe. China had made a road inside Indian territory. Tibet had turned into a ghetto. So much so that Dalai Lama had to leave Tibet. The country was not in a position to send patrol parties to check its borders. If sent, then the Chinese could capture them and we could do nothing. They had encroached upon our land and we were not in a position to retrieve even one inch out of that. And now Nehru was again telling the country that he was bold enough to safeguard the frontiers. It was a big fraud. He was not capable of securing the border. By November 1959 the Chinese were in occupation of 6,000 sq. miles of Indian territory. They would occupy another 5000-6000 sq. miles of Indian territory before the 1962 war. And in the war they would occupy another 2000 sq. miles.²¹ Nehru was totally incapable of facing the challenge.

On 28th August 1959, he was asked in Lok Sabha, "What lies behind all this?" Nehru replied, "I cannot say; it is not fair for me to guess." If he couldn't guess then the Chinese were going to make things clear for him. Zhou En Lai's letter of 8th September 1959 had repudiated the validity of McMahon Line and laid claim to large parts of Indian territory. Now they had made the things absolutely clear. Was he capable of doing anything about it? Unfortunately! He was not.

From then onwards Nehru could not pretend that all was well with the Chinese. In the Parliament year after year the MPs had been protesting against his policies and had succeeded in silencing them with falsehood and rhetorics. By September 1959 it had become clear that the border issue had become more and more entangled and there was no solution in sight. The Chinese were not as easy to deal with as he had imagined. It was no more possible to feed the nation on falsehood. To hide the issue from public would some day force it to explode with full force. The situation became too hot for him to hide from the country. "Nehru, reversing the policy he had followed for nearly five years of treating the boundary disputes as matters to be discussed by the two governments at a confidential level, now decided to place the whole correspondence before Parliament, (after Zhou's 8 Sept. letter).

He had, at last, been forced to recognize that this was not a matter of minor specific disputes which could be settled by discussions, of out-of-date maps which out of inertia had not been rectified.....”²²

Was it that up to now for whatsoever reason he had wrongly trusted the Chinese and now onwards he would take correct decisions? He had not changed much. He was not capable of challenging and removing the Chinese from Aksai-Chin. He would only find an excuse not to act. About Aksai Chin area Nehru told Lok Sabha on 12.9.59, “I have to be frank to the house....which has been challenged, not (only) today but for hundred years. It has been challenged to the ownership of this strip of territory....It has been challenged all the time.”²³

These were plain lies. Never in history had the Chinese put their feet on that territory. They had never come so far before. It was Nehru who had embraced them when they wanted to enter Tibet in 1950. Hadn't he used this hundred year argument when he claimed that nobody had disputed their suzerainty over Tibet? The same Nehru had been warned several times to be on guard against the designs of the Chinese. Then he had called such advisers cowards and spoken of his internal strength. Now no such strength was apparent. He had misled the country about his capability to safeguard the borders. He had said again and again that the frontier was firm. Now he himself was saying it was disputed.

The situation had become too hot to handle. As the situation had become grim, the government which had made a policy of discreet silence on the issue of border, brought out the first white paper on 7 September, 1959. Thereafter more were issued one after another.

There was no hope of any settlement with the Chinese. From that time onwards he had to change his future plan of action. Slowly and slowly he would create an impression in the country as if he was a nice saintly person who had been ill treated by China. At the same time he would assure the country day and night that he would secure the borders of the country. Whereas, in fact, he would hardly do anything!

The Wronged Prime Minister

On 10th September 1959 he said in Rajya Sabha, "Now, it was possibly an error or a mistake on my part not to have brought the facts before the House.....We might have been wrong, but it was not a crisis."²⁴ Two days later he said in Lok Sabha, "If I have erred in the past by delaying the placing of papers before the House, I shall not err again.....But the situation is such that we have to keep the country and especially Parliament in full touch with the developments."²⁵ This was not the language an arrogant Nehru was used to. But the situation had become too grim to handle and a change of track had become imperative.

He further said, "I often wonder if we, that is the Government of India and the government of China, speak the same language, and if, using the same words or similar words, we mean the same thing.....But it is not a question of a mile or two. It is something more precious than a hundred or a thousand miles. People's passions have been brought to a high level not because of a patch of territory but because they feel that we have not received a fair treatment in this matter and have been treated rather casually by the Chinese Government and an attempt is made, if I may use the word, to bully us.....In his most recent letter, Mr. Zhou En-Lai gives a list of places where India has committed aggression in the air and on land. There is no sea; otherwise, we would have been accused of committing aggression on sea also.....And to have it at the back of your mind that you are going to change the whole frontier between Tibet and India and later bring it up does not seem to be quite straight or fair play."

"Now, a very favourite word with the Chinese authorities is "imperialism". It seems to me that sometimes this word is used to cover every sin and everything as if that was an explanation of every argument. The Chinese state today is a great, colossal State. Was this State born as such from the head of Brahma? How did it grow so big and great? Surely, in past ages by the ability of its people and the conquest of its warriors; in other words by Chinese imperialism! I am not talking of the present, more enlightened days of China, but of the old days. The Chinese State grew in that way, and came into Tibet."

Two days later he said in the Lok Sabha, "I do not wish to use strong words, but it is the pride and arrogance of might that is showing in their language, in their behaviour towards us and in many things that they have done....Even a petty spot, even a yard of territory, is important if coercively and aggressively taken from us. It is not the yard of territory that counts but the coercion. It makes no difference to China or India whether a few yards of territory in the mountains are on this side or on that side. But it makes a great deal of difference if that is done in an insulting, aggressive, offensive, violent manner, by us or by them.....it involves a fundamental change in the whole geography of our country, the Himalayas being handed over as a gift to them. This is a claim which, whether India exists or does not exist, cannot be agreed to. There the matter ends....Let us realize that the real danger at the present moment is not of armies pouring in; the real danger is the words that are being said in Peking."²⁶

He told Rajya Sabha on 4.9.59, "Natural friendship' does not exist if you are weak and if you are looked down as a weak country!" Nehru told parliament at the beginning of September 1959. 'Friendship' cannot exist between the weak and the strong, between a country that is trying to bully and the other who accepts to be bullied."²⁷ "Nehru was here speaking (10.9.59) as if of others, but it is plain that he was also speaking for himself. He had tacitly renounced his earlier attitude—in which he had maintained that the boundary question was not one in which national pride was at stake—and was speaking now as if that pride was fully and properly engaged. This led him to the sort of hyperbole that, in the mouths of other politicians, he would no doubt have denounced as demagoguery."²⁸

It was not his friend China of whom he was speaking. Nehru was speaking of a different China. The arrogant one! A friend who had turned foe! The speeches were designed to gain sympathy of the people and parliament. He was not using "I" but "us." In the Lok Sabha he said on 12th September 1959, "That is a claim (regarding border) which it is quite impossible for India or almost any Indian ever to admit, whatever the consequences....This is a claim which, whether India exists or does not exist, cannot be agreed to. There the matter ends."²⁹ But till then he rode roughshod without

bothering to consult the people, parliament, bureaucracy or even his cabinet colleagues. Now he invoked the pride of the whole nation. That was a risky game and could hardly substitute for military preparation. The claim of the Chinese that the border was not a settled one had upset Nehru. But he had no plans to stop their encroachments. He would speak and speak and speak and nothing else. There the matter ended with him.

It had become clear to Nehru that Zhou's claim of unsettled borders was a serious matter. He told Rajya Sabha that in 1956 he had spoken to Zhou En-Lai about the McMahon Line, and the latter had agreed to accept it. He had again confirmed it with Zhou and was satisfied with his reply. So that he might not forget what had transpired he had made a note of it in his diary. As if this is how the countries deal with one another? After three years he was informing the country of his verbal assurances to the country. While he had an entry in his diary, the Chinese had produced maps off and on where large tracks of Indian frontiers were shown in China. And Nehru was at pains to inform that the Chinese had told him that those were old maps yet to be revised.

But shrewdly, Nehru was speaking of yards and one or two miles as if the whole dispute was about a small area. China had a firm grip on all the area it occupied. It had a network of roads there. India was still far away from doing that. When China was building roads Nehru was busy making misleading speeches. In the year 1959 the former was in effective occupation of 5000 sq. miles of Indian territory and the latter was deliberately creating an impression as if it was a matter of a few miles. 'the height in the area was 11,000 feet, 17,000 feet, 20,000 feet,' page 200, 'mile here mile there...a mile here a mile there,' page 204, 'uninhabitable area, 17,000 feet high, not even a blade of grass grows there,' page 206, 'few yards of territory,' page 209, 'possession of a few mountain peaks...patch of territory,' page 209, 'a mile here or there, not the yard of territory that counts.' Page 212, 'mile here or there' page 213,³⁰ 'It makes no difference to China or India whether a few yards of territory in the mountains are on this side or on that side,'

These could not be words of somebody who was determined to stop the Chinese. The signal was clear to the Chinese. What

was actually thousands of sq. miles of Indian territory was only a few miles to Nehru and he was not bothered about such few miles. There was nothing to stop the Chinese from encroachments.

At the same time bogus claims were made by him about his capacity to face the Chinese aggression. 'challenge will be met,' page 214, 'defence forces are ready,' page 216;³¹ To the chief ministers he wrote on 1st October 1959, "We are not going to make a gift of the Himalayas to anybody whatever the consequences."³² Again he wrote on 26th October 1959, "That does not mean our being complacent or our not taking all necessary and feasible steps to meet any dangers that might confront us."³³ He made such bogus claims right from 1950 up to the Indo-China war of 1962. He accepted the fact that the situation was grim. "Our long frontier with China, extending over 2,600 miles was till recently what might be called a dead frontier with no one thinking very much about it. Now it has become a live and vital frontier and, in the best circumstances, it will remain a frontier of dangerous potentialities."³⁴ His policies had turned a peaceful border into a dangerous clashing ground. His remarks show that he had realized how the Chinese were going to behave. Unfortunately he was not capable of tackling them.

In the Lok Sabha Nehru said on 28th August 1959, "...This is a frontier of over 2000 miles."

Shri Vajpayee retorted, "What is the use of repeating that it is a long frontier? Are we not in a position to defend it?"³⁵

Nehru had no answer. 1950 onwards he was repeatedly warned about the long frontier and the need to prepare for any eventuality. He had silenced them all with false assurances and hollow rhetorics. One of the solutions could have been to agree with China to leave the area between the two countries as peace-zone with neither China nor India trying to occupy it. No such effort was made.

At times he would speak in a language which did not lead anywhere, "Maintaining our dignity, maintaining our rights, maintaining our self-respect, and yet not allowing our selves to drift into wrong attitudes and hostile attitudes....."³⁶ Nehru was speaking all this in the context of the Chinese encroachments. One would surmise that he was going to prepare to face the threat.

Unfortunately, that was not true. "These major incursions were naturally resented; 'we cannot', said Nehru, 'allow China to keep a foot on our chest.' But he did not plan retaliatory military action at every point where these intrusions occurred....He was now of the view that the Chinese had a one track mind, took a one sided view of their rights and responsibilities, had a vision distorted by their semi-isolation since 1949 and were passing through one of the phases of expansionism which occurred regularly in Chinese history whenever the country was strong and united. No country in the world seemed to care less for peace."³⁷

Two things were apparent. The border issue with China was messed up and Nehru was mostly limiting himself to rhetorics. On being asked if India had any check-posts on Ladakh border, Nehru had replied, "We have some check-posts. For instance, I have just mentioned a check-post called Chushul. It is not only a check-post but is an improvised airfield where some four years ago I happened to go also."³⁸ His reply did not disclose that there were no check-posts on the border. Had there been any then we would have come to know of Aksai Chin Road. And the check-posts that we had did not have any logistic support to maintain them.

On 28th August 1959 he had told the Lok Sabha that the Chinese were confronting the Indian patrols in large numbers. For him that was enough and there was no need for him to do anything else. It was clear that something had to be done. President of India was concerned about the happenings on the border.

When the President of India spoke out

Under those circumstances the President of India wrote to him on 5th December 1959, "I wrote to you on the 23rd September 1959 a pretty long top secret letter making certain suggestions regarding the long border we have in the north-west, north and north-east frontier.....I think a plan should be prepared for making arrangements for security and defence.....I understand that there

is another road or track more or less parallel to it (Aksai Chin road) further south and running across our territory. If this road has been built or is being built, it will undoubtedly be in constant possession of the Chinese.....It is right that we should do our best to negotiate and settle this dispute with China in a peaceful way. But I do not know what will happen if such negotiation either does not take place or prove fruitless. They are already in possession of thousands of square miles of our territory and if negotiations do not take place or does not succeed, they simply sit quiet and remain where they are on our territory.

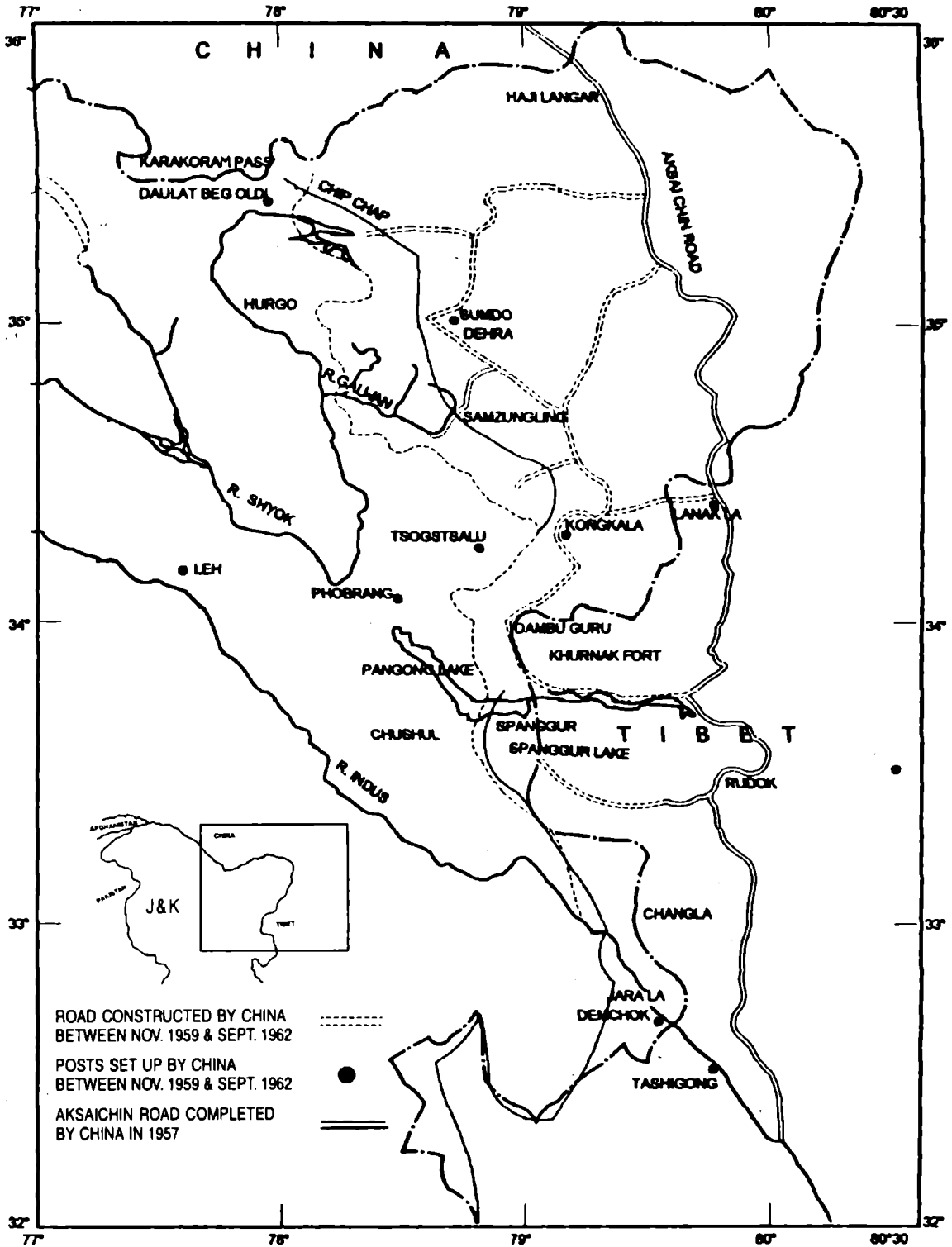
We have therefore to think also of the steps which one day or other we may be called upon to take to recover our territory. That enterprise cannot be undertaken unless there is preparation for it. I would therefore suggest that while such steps as are possible may be taken for resisting any further incursions, a plan for defence of a long term nature should be made.....You will recollect that at the Governor's Conference the Chief of Staff told us that the forces were just enough to meet the other requirements as they existed before the border with China became a live issue, and it was not easy to deploy forces to the NEFA Frontier from the reserves.....Thus in any case, a large addition has to be made to our forces.....I am troubling you with this at this moment because I think both the budgets for the next financial year and the Third Five Year Plan are on the anvil now.

The government will have to think out how to finance this....we are now forcibly awakened to the fact of the existence of a long border which has to be protected as best as we can. We shall continue to hope that there will be a peaceful settlement and we shall do our utmost to get that effected, but we can not rest only on that hope and that efforts of ours, and as any effective steps to be taken will require very long preparation, the sooner such preparations are begun, the better."³⁹

It is apparent that Nehru had not even bothered to reply to the earlier letter from the President. The letter made it clear that not mere words but some effort had to be made to safeguard the border. He had made it clear that the preparations were going to take time and it was now that the preparations had to start. New recruitments had to be made and monetary provision had to be made in the budget. It was a permanent nuisance to get sanction

MAP NO. 2

Roads constructed by China in Indian areas
between 1955 end & Septemeber 1962.



from the finance ministry to buy a number of items needed by the armed forces. Nehru could not afford to ignore the suggestions if he was serious about defending the border. Needless to say that he did not act on the suggestions of the President. At the Governor's Conference referred above, the President had mentioned that the preparation to meet any aggression was not adequate. This had irritated Nehru no end.

The letter also revealed what Nehru had so far not disclosed. Thousands of square miles of Indian territory was grabbed by China and another road parallel to Aksai Chin Road had been built south of it. The President had come to know about that second road. Hardly had Nehru accepted the existence of one road when the President confronted him with the second road made by the Chinese in Indian territory. As was typical of Nehru he kept it a secret from the nation. He did nothing else.

Two days later, on 7th Nehru replied to the President. It is clear that he had no intention to act on the advice of the President. But he made a suggestion to the President that he should communicate with Nehru verbally and not through letters. The President did not like his suggestion. "I have been worried by your suggestion that I should send for you and speak to you if I have anything to communicate rather than write. I am afraid this will stultify me in performing my constitutional duty to bring to the notice of the Government any matter which I desire to communicate to it in the way I consider the best."⁴⁰

After a crushing defeat in the 1962 war, Nehru wrote to Dr. Rajendra Prasad on 8th November 1962, "They have an army in Tibet alone which is far larger than the entire Indian Army; they have roads all over Tibet so that they can rush troops at any point quickly and..."⁴¹ Had not the President advised him to be prepared for such an eventuality only? But he had not taken the necessary steps to secure the border. It was clear to the former that the latter was dealing with the situation in a most irresponsible manner. The letter the President had written to Nehru was exactly to avert the disaster that finally overtook India.

The Forward Policy

Before the advent of the Chinese on the scene; secluded, remote and high-altitude areas between Tibet and India were left unoccupied by both the countries. And there was no trouble on that account. With the advent of the Chinese on the scene everybody except Nehru got alarmed and could see the need of securing the border. Expert advice was sought and in one voice all had come to the conclusion that it was imperative to have roads and check-posts up to the border. Unfortunately, Nehru had no commitment to protect the border and was lethargic to take necessary steps. When the Chinese activities forced him to take some steps his half hearted approach led to the so called forward policy.

Willy-nilly India got entangled into that exercise. Forward policy is not some well-defined term but it is in currency now in regard to the unique exercise undertaken by India on the border. In the fifties Indian para-military forces established some posts on the border with China. Mostly these were in Arunachal Pradesh. Almost always these posts were established without any regard for the feasibility of maintaining them. Still thousands of square miles of land which India claimed its own remained without any Indian presence and were left at the mercy of the Chinese. As India did not take any steps to check their movement they went on advancing into such areas. To stop them from encroaching further; haphazardly posts were established wherever they seemed to be moving forward.

“And then came the so called ‘Forward Policy.’ Briefly stated, it meant moving forward from our existing positions and covering the space up to the line of claim by patrolling and establishment of posts even though unsupported by reinforcements, fire power and logistics adequate to meet the Chinese reaction, should it materialize.”⁴²

It can be safely said that the Intelligence Chief Mullick was the first initiator of this policy. His job brought to his knowledge the Chinese movement in border areas. India government should have immediately moved in to challenge the Chinese. That did

not happen. Mullick could not bear that his country's border was encroached upon with impunity by China. Although forward-policy was no answer to that!

“Back in Dec. 1958.....he (I.B. director, Mullick) had urged the opening of a series of posts in Indian claimed territory west, south-east and south of the Aksai-Chin. These posts included two located near either end of the Chinese road, were to forestall development of a more complex Chinese road system in the area, which the Chinese seemed intent on adding to their already existing route.”⁴³ The army chief was against such posts. These were established without any logistic support. So he was opposed to such an adventure.⁴⁴ Gen. Thorat was also against establishing such posts without any logistic support. “Here it would be relevant to say something about the forward policy over the implementation of which I fell foul with the Defence Minister and later with the Prime Minister.”⁴⁵

Rather than facing the Chinese head on; forward policy was pursued. “In setting up the check posts all along the frontier, as we then understood its location, we often came in conflict with both the Army Headquarters and the Ministry of External Affairs. We were often accused of going into disputed territory or trespassing beyond our borders.....we did not give in and our contention was that as the responsibility for guarding the frontier had been given to us, we were free to open posts.”⁴⁶ In the year 1959 the Indian patrols came in conflict with the Chinese forces. It was clear that the Indian side was not capable of facing them. Thereafter the movement of the patrols was stopped. “As the Chinese had become more active on the border, Indians had good reason to increase their vigil. But after the skirmishes the forward patrolling was stopped in October 1959.”⁴⁷ This left the field open to the Chinese.

“If the forward patrolling by the armed forces had not been stopped in October, 1959, and instead the police had been reinforced by army units, much of the territory west of the Aksai Chin road as well as the pastures between the Chang Chenmo river and Spanggur Lakes could have been saved from the dragon's clutches.”⁴⁸ Between 1959 and 1962 they occupied 5000 sq. miles of Indian claimed area. Nehru had no courage to challenge them.

Although he had said in Lok Sabha on 12th September 1959, "This is a claim (China did not accept McMahon Line) which it is quite impossible for India or almost any Indian ever to admit, whatever the consequences. There is no question of mediation, conciliation or arbitration about it."⁴⁹ Off and on he would make such statements that were for public consumption and not meant to be implemented. He created a false impression as if he was determined to secure the border. He would not accept Chinese claims but also not challenge their advance and did not retrieve a single inch of territory from them.

"Usually the Chinese denied all charges of violation but where there was overwhelming evidence against them they said that the incident was of purely local character attributable to the inexperience of the post commanders. Prime Minister also connived at these incidents saying that they were only minor occurrences which were not uncommon on any international border, and went ahead with his talk of 'peaceful co-existence.' The meetings between him and the Chinese Prime Minister achieved nothing, and the 'Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai' chorus continued to dupe the Indian nation."⁵⁰

The soldiers could not comprehend the attitude of Nehru. "I often wondered why Pandit Nehru took such a complacent attitude. Whatever the reasons, he and his government refused to admit that there was any danger to India.....It may have been all right for Pandit Nehru to acquiesce in this position but it was not possible for me to tolerate it. After all, mine were the only troops in NEFA, and in case of an attack they and they alone were in a position to offer resistance. What frightened me most was the fear that this responsibility for the defense of NEFA would be thrust on me at the last minute without giving me the means to discharge it."

"I, therefore urged the Chief of the Army Staff to request the Ministry of Defense to include the defense of NEFA in the operational tasks given to Eastern Command, and to make available the additional troops and equipment, required for this purpose. He agreed, but his recommendation was brusquely rejected by the Defence Minister. A confused government was not ready to give clear instructions."

".....While I was not competent to question the government's

view that there would be no war between India and China, the fact remained that it was a possibility if not a probability. In the event of this possibility becoming a reality there was no doubt that the government would, by a single stroke of pen, hand over the defence of NEFA to Eastern command—and what hope did I have of discharging this responsibility? None—for I had neither the troops nor....”⁵¹

“The more I thought the more perplexed I became about the government’s complacent attitude towards NEFA. The Chief and I broached the subject with the Prime Minister and the Defence Minister on a number of occasions but they did not take serious note of our views....They saw no reason why they should make warlike preparations in NEFA, which they feared, might annoy China.”⁵²

“I have given this gist in the hope that posterity will take note of the fact that the staff and commander (who was me) of the undivided Eastern Command, had foreseen the possibility of a Chinese invasion in NEFA, exactly three years before it came. Let future generations know that they were not guilty of complacency or of wrong thinking and certainly not of failure to give timely warning of the danger which they for saw over-taking us in NEFA.”⁵³

The above given account makes it clear how the armed forces were left to wonder how the government wanted to tackle the situation. Whereas the Chinese fortified their claim with the strength of their army; Nehru mostly depended on rhetorics to support him. His high sounding speeches were meaningless and had no relevance to the developing crisis. Nehru said, “This was one of those peak moments in history when a plunge had to be taken in some direction which might have powerful and far reaching effects not only on India but on Asia and even the world. Events were poised on the edge of history, and the issues surrounding the border dispute were so huge, vague, deep-seated, far-reaching and intertwined that one had to think and act with clarity and strength.....Even an alliance for assistance in equipment was undesirable and betrayed a weakening mentality. It was best to rely on her own ability to produce what ever she required.....but if, in panic, she abandoned non-alignment, which had helped to isolate China, then India was doomed morally, spiritually, psychologically, in every way practically. Nobody will respect us in

the wide world; we will become some kind of a camp-follower with no energy and will of our own left.”⁵⁴

It is difficult to make out what Nehru was talking about. Which plunge was he going to take? What effect was it going to have on the world? Which issues was he talking about? What was wrong in taking assistance? Why did he take assistance in equipment after the rout in the war with China? Did India produce what it needed? Wasn't India producing hair clips in its defence establishment? Why to abandon non-alignment in panic? Why not to abandon with a clear mind to seek friends who would help? How is it morally or spiritually wrong to join hands with friends to defend the country? Has our respect enhanced after a thorough beating from China? Was it a speech or a tantric mantra to confuse any sensible mind?

In the matter of Hyderabad Nehru had failed to take a bold step. Patel did the job. When India achieved independence, Hyderabad did not join it. Nehru was not capable of taking a bold decision. “And finally, Nehru's pathetic indecision on Hyderabad.....Nehru as usual wrapped himself in eloquent inactivity and lofty indecision.”⁵⁵

He would go on and on with worthless speeches without any substance. “He expected Indians, while eschewing futile gestures, not to submit on matters of principles. It was completely and absolutely wrong to think that the government of India which he directed would be cowed or surrender through fright to China or to any other power or a combination of the whole damned world.”⁵⁶

In the Parliament in an answer to Achary Kripalani on 21st December 1959 he said, “....As far as I am concerned and so far as this Government is concerned, we will negotiate and negotiate to the bitter end.” Here was a clear indication of what he was capable of doing. In the year 1950, he had told Parliament that he would fight and fight to save the border. Not any more. It was a clear signal to the Chinese to go on advancing.

While speaking on 11th and 12th Nov.1959 he said, “I might have a thousand defects, but I am not afraid; so too India might make a thousand mistakes but her hands and feet should not grow cold at the first sight of danger. Fear was the worst possible companion. Rather than resort to adventurous tactics and rush

troops to every point on the border, India would rely on building communications....” “If China did meanwhile mount a major invasion, he had been assured by the army commanders that they could meet it adequately and with success. On the border the terrain was in China’s favour but, in case of invasion, the balance of advantage would tilt progressively towards India.” (Nehru to Chief Ministers, 4November, 1959)

Nehru was lying. The army commanders had no good reason to give him assurance of success in war with China. He mentioned something about balance of advantage. He perhaps had in mind the strategy propounded by Gen. Thorat. Gen. Thimayya agreed with Thorat that militarily his strategy was correct but it was not to the liking of the politicians and it could cost him the post of Army Chief on promotion. Thorat was not made Army Chief when Thimayya retired. The government wanted to appoint a weak general, who would listen to their whims.

For Nehru Forward Policy had become military strategy. Rhetorics were his main weapon. And with favourites as defence minister and army general he decided to face the challenges which then confronted him.

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Wrong Decisions all the Way

Dilemma of the Shifting Border

On 1st January 1960, Nehru wrote to the chief ministers, “We have to face quite a new kind of trouble on our frontiers. This frontier trouble with China is a major event for us and for India and it might well be considered to be a historic development which will pursue us for a long time.”¹ Not a very welcome message on the first day of the year! But the relations between India and China were deteriorating. The situation was not heading the way he had claimed it would. He had always claimed that China was a peace loving country. Slowly and slowly the relationship soured and forced Nehru to accept that the issues involved may not get solved for a long time to come. This is where we finally reached with China.

In the second half of April 1960, Zhou En-Lai was in India for consultations. Both the sides could not reach an agreement on the border question. On 25th April he held a press conference. Regarding the boundary question he put forward six points for India’s consideration. Next day in Lok Sabha Nehru made it clear that he differed from the views expressed by the Chinese Prime Minister. Then he narrated the points as proposed by Zhou En-Lai.

1. The first point was that there was a dispute between the two countries. Nehru agreed that there was a dispute. Up to then he was reluctant to do so. He gave the second point. He was reading from a note issued by Zhou at the press conference.
2. There exists between the two countries a line of actual control up to which each side exercises administrative jurisdiction.
3. While determining the boundary between the two countries, certain geographical principles such as watershed, river valleys and mountain passes could be applicable equally to all sectors of the boundary.
4. A settlement of the boundary question between the two countries could take into account the national feelings of the

- two peoples for the Himalayas and the Karakoram mountains.
5. Pending settlement of the boundary question through discussions, both sides should keep the line of actual control and should not put forward territorial claims as preconditions, but individual adjustments may be made.
 6. In order to ensure tranquility on the border so as to facilitate the discussions, both sides should continue to refrain from patrolling along all sectors of the boundary.

As usual Zhou had played his move well and Nehru was no match for him. While narrating the points the latter accepted that he was confused. The former had said that there was a line of control. He did not give the line and Nehru did not ask for it. As per the fourth point Zhou made it clear that if India had feeling about the Himalayas then the Chinese could have feeling about the Karakoram. Of late Nehru had been speaking with emotions about the border issue. Zhou must have had that in mind.

By putting forward the fifth point Zhou wanted India to put aside the claims as put forward by India up to then. He was ready for individual adjustments. That is to say, they were going to remain where they were. They were not ready for any big concessions. The sixth point, refrained both the sides from patrolling the borders. In the absence of any maps from the Chinese it was not clear whether they were going to move forward or not, and how they could be checked if they did so.

For almost one year Nehru had been speaking about the Chinese encroachments. The encroachments were taking place for the last five or six years. But when he met Zhou En-Lai he did not mention anything about the same. Zhou had said at the press conference that India had not raised the issue of Chinese aggression. Had there been any; Nehru would have raised it with him. That was the point the Chinese were bringing to the notice of every one. The question was raised in the Lok Sabha.

A.B.Vajpayee: He (Zhou) is reported to have said that the issue of Chinese aggression was not raised by India.

The Prime Minister: He said that he was not asked to vacate or something like that.²

After saying so he put forward his views on the subject. As

was his practice, he did so in Parliament and not in front of Zhou, where he should have done so. "The Prime Minister of the Chinese People's Republic presumably came here because something important had happened, the important thing being that, according to us, they had entered a large area of our territory, which we considered aggression. That was the whole basis of his coming here. And Hon. Members may remember that in one or two public statements I made at the airport and at the banquet, I had repeatedly referred to something having been done which should be undone. Our whole argument was based on the Chinese forces having come into our territory." He put forward his argument that he had put forward his case on other occasions also. Still whenever he had put forth his argument, they were put in a round about manner and not straight and not where he should have made them; in front of Zhou. Zhou had come for a settlement and not to stand trial for his misdeeds. For the last nine years Nehru had been speaking in the parliament of the firm Indian border only to be repudiated by Zhou.

Some time back Nehru had said without any basis that the Chinese were in control of Tibet for two hundred years and that nobody had challenged their claim. Then the Chinese reminded him what he had said. He further told Parliament, "They referred to something that I had said in Parliament here which some hon. Members perhaps did not like. They took advantage of that from their point of view." Mr. Hem Barua asked if that was pointed out to the Chinese. As usual Nehru had not done that.

Further he told Parliament, "But one thing which is worth noticing is that throughout our correspondence or talks, they have never precisely given their boundaries by defining the latitude, longitude, mountain peaks etc. as we have done. Hon. Members will see how even in the White Paper we have given our boundary very precisely. But our efforts to get their boundary precisely did not succeed." He was trying to make out as if he had done a big thing by giving details to the Chinese. It was not so. India was presenting China with all the documents and China was mostly keeping quiet. As such China was free to make fresh claims as and when it desired. Then again he had failed to confront the Chinese and instead put forward India's stand in Parliament. That did not

bind China to anything. Unfortunately when that self-appointed guardian of world peace was busy policing the whole world, China was building roads in the areas it was claiming. There was nothing to suggest that India was going to resist the Chinese advance.

Nehru had claimed that China was in Tibet for the last two hundred years: in fact, China had never before 1950 been present in the border areas. Naturally, it did not have proper records of the areas. As vast areas were not occupied in the border region by either of the two countries, China was busy occupying as much area as it could. And wherever it reached it claimed that it had always been there. Nehru himself had claimed that there was no dispute about Chinese presence in Tibet for the last two hundred years. Then it was difficult to challenge them. India was at the same time providing the Chinese with all the details of geographical features. That was the pitiable situation created by him. In the past he had shown many gimmicks to assure the country that he was capable of looking after the country's interests. All of them had failed. His latest was to assure the country that the records of the country's borders were a very powerful weapon against the Chinese which they would not be able to withstand.

It may not be out of place to remind the readers again how he had been warned in 1950 when the Tibetan crisis developed that it was necessary to safeguard the northern frontiers. On 7th December, 1950 he was told in Parliament, "If we try to avoid difficulty at this time we may have to face a much more difficult situation in the future." At that time his arrogance knew no bounds. Mr. Masani had given some correct advice; but Nehru ridiculed him, "They know exactly what should be done at any moment.....It is a pity Mr. Masani is not in the White House at Washington to advise them."

Further he had said, ".....There is one thing which can go up, and that is your morale, and that is your determination not to surrender, whatever the danger. If that is present then nothing can conquer you. Nothing will protect you, because there is an inner strength which you lackand do you think that if any danger or peril comes to this country, we are going to weaken or surrender or bend down before it? Even if do not have a single gun, we will fight and fight to the death." Unfortunately the inner strength was

no where in sight. In 1959, he did not say 'fight and fight' but said he would 'negotiate and negotiate'. On 26 April 1960, he made his position clear.

Mr. A. B. Vajpayee: Has the government committed itself that, pending factual investigation, no steps will be taken to eject the Chinese from Indian soil?

The Prime Minister: I should think that it was absolutely clear. You either have war or you have some kind of talks. You cannot have something in between the two.³

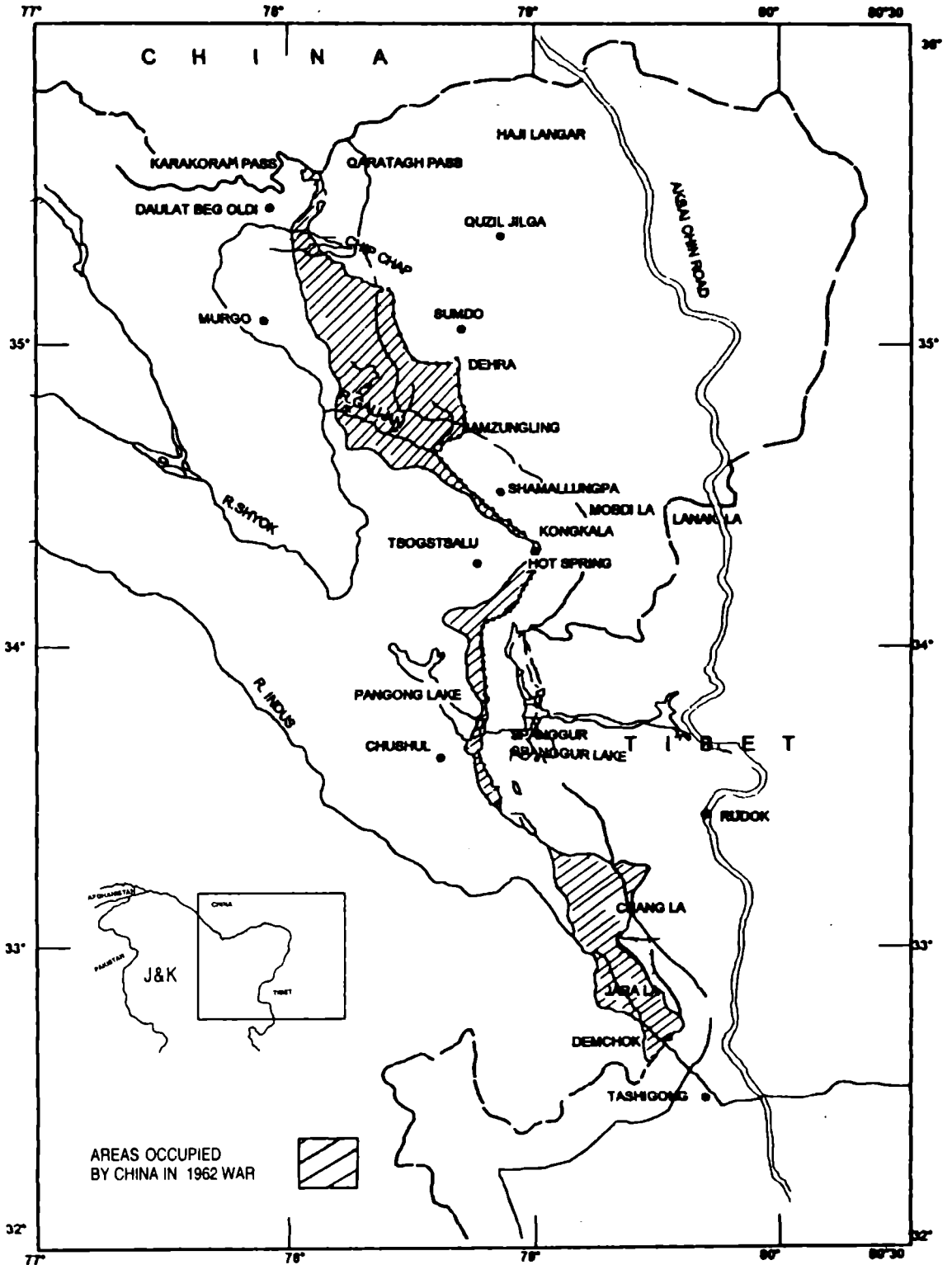
Chinese Proposal Rejected

Nehru outright rejected the proposal put forward by Zhou En Lai to settle the border issue. A golden opportunity was lost. No doubt the proposal was favourable to the Chinese. But in the light of the fact that Nehru was totally incapable of checking any further Chinese encroachment; that proposal was better than leaving the field open to them. Zhou En-Lai had come with a big team and had come with an intention of reaching an agreement. Before coming to India in April 1960, Zhou En Lai had made efforts for summit level talks. Nehru had put certain conditions for the same. By end of December China had repudiated the Indian claim to traditional borders.

In January 1960 China and Burma came to a border settlement. The McMahon Line between those countries was accepted as the border. Then Zhou En Lai had come to India. Was there not a very clear hint that the McMahon Line could be accepted? It is suggested that China would have accepted the Arunachal border if India accepted the border in Ladakh as per the Chinese claims. That was not a bad bargain when seen in the light of the fact that Nehru was not capable of protecting the borders. All that time the Chinese were not sitting idle. Their intentions were clear. "During the official talks in 1960, they had put forward a new map claiming their boundary much further to the west of the border as claimed by them in 1956."⁴

"So, in the western sector, the Chinese started the occupation

MAP NO. 3 Indian areas occupied by China in 1962 Indo - China War



of Indian territory from 1955, had reached certain positions by June 1959, and thereafter constantly pushed forward the 'line of actual control' and claimed that the traditional and customary boundary lay wherever they happened at the moment to be. In 1956 an official map of China delineated the boundary in the western sector incorporating in China about 12,000 sq. miles of Indian territory; but the map carried a legend that the boundaries as shown on the map were yet to be revised. However, Zhou informed Nehru in September 1959, that the alignment on this map was the correct delineation. At the talks of the officials in 1960, the Chinese presented a map advancing their claims to take in another 2,000 square miles; and the Chinese Government claimed that the two lines, of 1956 and 1960, were identical."⁵

India stopped patrolling the borders after the 1959 skirmishes. "The immobilization of our forward patrols (after 21 October 1959) was taken advantage of by the Chinese immediately. Unhindered by us, the Chinese rapidly completed the circular Haji Langar-shamul-Lungar-Lanak La road of which the Aksai chin road was roughly the diameter. This enabled the Chinese to occupy quietly another 8,000 sq. miles of our territory."⁶ Other connecting roads were being built and the intelligence informed the government of all the developments. The President of India had informed Nehru about the circular road being built by the Chinese. But there was nobody to stop them.

"In September 1960, we sent another report of wide spread Chinese activities all along the frontier in Tibet including area bordering south-east Ladakh, which had remained quiet till then....In November 1960, we again reported that the Chinese had consolidated their position in Eastern Ladakh along the line running north to east and then to south through Shamul Lungpa, Kongka La, Kyringo Traggur, Dambu Guru, Kharnak Fort and Spanggur."⁷ Intelligence was keeping the government informed about the activities of the Chinese. Hectic road building activity was going on. Nehru maintained complete silence. The Chinese activities hardly mattered to him. He kept clinging to his chair. Facing the Chinese challenge never seemed to be the aim.

One of the army generals on the frontier observed, "Our reaction to the mounting evidence of China's hostile attitude was to set up a Border Roads Organisation to construct roads to the far

flung frontier territories. Although this was a step in the right direction, no sense of urgency was injected into the tasks given to the Border Roads Organisation.”⁸

Even a year later he was not capable of doing anything. “Some Hon. Members have asked why we have not taken stronger action. The answer would be that one takes strong action when all other actions are precluded and also when one is prepared for strong action. A further answer would be that when the consequences are so vast and far-reaching, one does not jump into that type of action unless there is absolutely no other way left.”⁹ He said so when the Chinese were busy encroaching upon Indian territory and had already occupied 10,000 sq. miles of Indian territory. That the Chinese had occupied 10,000 sq. miles of Indian territory was not enough reason to challenge them! At the same time he informed the members that we were becoming stronger by putting our paperwork in order. He was using words which he himself had declared would not help. Nehru had said in the Lok Sabha on 27.4.59—“The attempt to explain a situation by the use of rather worn out words, phrases, and slogans is seldom helpful.”¹⁰

Regarding talks Nehru had told the parliament, “Does not Hon. Member realize.....The pressure on the Chinese government which is being constantly exercised by the facts, by India’s attitude supported as it is by all the facts?”¹¹ China was under no pressure. “Within three years ie by September 1962, the Chinese had constructed a large network of military roads and posts,.....At certain points the network of military posts was more than one hundred miles to the west of Chinese positions in 1959.”¹²

The final result was there for all to see. Time and again Nehru juggled with words to the disadvantage of the country. “When critics pointed out the government’s border policy in terms of appeasement and weakness, Nehru depicted it as patience based on strength, resolve tempered with a human concern about the catastrophic consequences for mankind if the two giants of Asia came to war.”¹³ His words suggested as if both the countries were equally strong. At the same time he went on assuring the country that the country was prepared to face the Chinese. That was not a fact.

Views of the Army Officers

An army officer has this to say about Nehru, "Jawahar Lal Nehru was a man of many delusions.....Nehru invented or (deluded himself that there was) an ancient friendship between the two countries. In fact hardly any Chinese (except for a handful of Han Buddhists) ever visited the land of the Buddha in the first millennium. No Indian ever went to Chinabut military science was a closed book to Nehrubut why did Nehru keep Parliament and the Indian people in the dark about the Chinese intrusions, which were increasing by the year? With his airy-fairy talks (mostly off the cuff) he kept leading India deeper and deeper into a trap, more of his creation than of the Chinese." "Nehru had dished out many a *fait accompli* in the past and got away with them."¹⁴

Brig. Dalvi was the commander of a brigade in Arunachal Pradesh. He knew the real strength of the forces. The state of preparedness can be gauged by what Brig. Dalvi had to say, "By end of 1960 when no preparation at all had been done Nehru had this to say, 'Necessary preparations have been made for the defence of Indian territory, and in about a year or two arrangements would be complete for developing communications to enable the Indian Defence Forces to move easily into difficult mountainous terrain of the northern border.'¹⁵ What Nehru said was a plain lie.

Another general has this to say, "Nehru told parliament: 'That at no time since independence, and of course before it, were our defence forces in better condition, in finer fettle, and with the background of our far greater industrial production....to help them, than they are today.' I being in the Army at that time knew fully well how weak was our tactical position and logistic support to undertake any worthwhile operations against China. This was Nehru's bluff, pure and simple."¹⁶

By May 1961, the Chinese roads were approaching their 1960 claim line. By September, 1961 the Army Headquarters asked the Intelligence Bureau to withdraw its posts from Daulat Beg Oldi, Qizil Langar etc. north of Murgo....for logistic reasons. The army was correct. In case of war those posts could not be held without roads and other logistic support. In the mean time the Chinese were making good progress in the absence of any resistance from

the Indian side. "By October 1961, Daulat Beg Oldi and the Track Junction posts discovered that the Chinese had already come nearly 30 miles further west from their circular Haji Langar-Shamul Lungpa road along the Chip Chap river valley and were also constructing a fort at a place only about four miles east of Daulat Beg Oldi. Chinese were coming along another unnamed river valley lying between the Track Junction and Murgo, which also ultimately merged with the Shyok valley."¹⁷

There was nothing to stop the Chinese. So lethargic was Nehru that leave aside confronting the Chinese, by the end of 1961, 5500 sq. miles of Indian territory in Arunachal was still not occupied by Indian forces. "In Arunachal Pradesh Operation Onkar was introduced in 1960 to man the posts by Assam Rifles all along the border. But work on this could start only by the end of 1961."¹⁸

Forward Policy and Nehru's Team

By 1960-61 Nehru was under constant pressure to act. The intelligence Bureau also wanted some steps to be taken to check the Chinese. A capable and strong leader would have taken a bold stand to check the Chinese. In 1961, under immense pressure Nehru made an honest statement. "My whole soul reacts against the idea of war anywhere. That is the training I have received throughout my life and I cannot get rid of it at the age of 72."¹⁹ His resignation or removal should have logically followed from this statement. But that was not to be. As Nehru was totally incapable of taking such a step, he had to think of other ways of meeting the situation. Forward policy seemed to be the answer. "The conception of the forward policy.....can be traced back to the beginning of 1960; but it was not really put into effect until the end of 1961.....The first evidence of these (explicit and immediate instructions) appears in a minute signed by the Foreign Secretary, S.D. Dutt, on May 29th, 1960."²⁰ From the military point of view it was a recipe for disaster.

"As far as the forward policy was concerned, both local commanders as well as Army Head quarters had explained to the

government that merely establishing a series of small posts along a defence line, without adequate backup in terms of both strength as well as logistic support, would result in exposing the troops to grave, unjust and avoidable risks; and would not be able to achieve the purpose for which they were sent out.”²¹

Menon wanted Gen. Thorat to implement the forward policy. Thorat refused. “It was my unshakeable conviction that if I were to listen to the Defence Minister, adopt his forward policy and send troops to the McMahon Line without adequate maintenance cover, I would be sending them to certain defeat and deaths. When I explained my views to the minister he was most annoyed”

Gen. Thorat spoke to Gen. Kaul who was very close to Menon, “I told Timmy (Kaul) about this interview and asked what he was going to do if he received a direct order to implement the Forward Policy. He shook his head and said, ‘No! He won’t. He will never commit himself in writing.’ He was quite right. Mr. Krishna Menon never issued a written order to implement the Forward Policy, and it remained unimplemented until I retired from service.”²² “It is to the credit of General Thimayya and General Thorat that we did not deploy in strength beyond Bomdilla, during their command. They were adamant.It was only after they left that we adopted the ill-fated Forward policy” said Dalvi. On retirement Thimayya had this harsh truth in mind when he said, “I hope that I am not leaving you as cannon fodder for the Chinese. God bless you.”²³ Thorat and Thimmaya retired on 8.5.61. His successor Gen. Thapar did not come in the way of Nehru. The later was at last free to do as he wished. Kaul was most willing to give him a helping hand. His assessment of Nehru’s compulsion is correct when he writes,

“Nehru was aware of mounting criticism of the people on this subject but also knew the handicaps from which our Armed Forces were suffering. He was therefore anxious to devise some via media and take action, short of war, in order to appease the people. Nehru accordingly had a meeting in his room somewhere in the autumn of 1961 in which Krishna Menon, General Thapar and I were present. He first saw on a military map all the recent incursions China had made against us. He said that whoever succeeded in establishing (even a symbolic) post, would establish a claim to that territory, as possession was nine-tenths of law. If the Chinese could set up posts, why couldn’t we? He was told that owing to numerical

and logistical difficulties, we could not keep up in this race with the Chinesewe had, however, already established a few nominal posts, which we were maintaining with some effort.”

“A discussion then followed, the upshot of which I understood to be that (Since China was unlikely to wage war with India,) there was no reason why we should not play a game of chess and a battle of wits with them, so far as the question of establishing posts was concerned. If they advanced in one place, we should advance in another”²⁴

“I think Nehru framed this policy principally for the benefit of the parliament and the public and also perhaps as a ‘strategy’ of beating the Chinese at their own game. He hit upon it during a period when the India-China relationship was deteriorating fast. He saw in it our reply to his critics. He landed in this situation due to constant and unrealistic criticism from the opposition benches in the parliament against the way he was handling the border situation.”²⁵ Nehru’s compulsions were political. Totally neglecting the military reality he thought of meeting his political goals. Kaul spoke of Nehru’s compulsions, but he was most enthusiastic in implementing the forward policy.

Another army officer writes, “Kaul commenced his ‘mouse play cat game’ dictating patrol routes, post locations etc; tasks which are the job of the man on the ground and not that of a staff officer, who had manoeuvred himself into this sensitive slot. A string of 60 penny pocket posts were established by mid-1961, well short of the McMahon Line, dominated by the Chinese with the exception of one at Demchok inside Chinese claimed territory. Daulet Singh’s recommendation to suspend the Forward Policy was not heeded.”²⁶ He would not hear to the correct advice and collect around him persons who would carry out his bidding.

“From the very beginning I was under pressure from divisional HQ to start pushing troops as far and as quickly as possible towards the high mountainous border..... unmindful that without assured resupply of ammunition, rations, medical cover and other impedimenta of battle, mere number of troops count for little.”

Kaul: Nehru's Best General

Kaul was one of the most prominent players in the matter of the forward policy. In the year 1961, Lt. Gen. Kaul was appointed the CGS. His rise in the military hierarchy was the result of his proximity to Nehru. He was an avid supporter of the forward policy. "Lt.-Gen. B.M.Kaul, QMG in May 1959, and, in 1961, as CGS was an enthusiastic supporter of the policy, and, as Nehru's cousin, enjoyed an influence in the extended defence organization out of all proportion to his rank and functions."²⁷ Nehru needed a person in the army who would do his bidding; and Kaul needed his patronage to rise in the army. The former was a good salesman. Whatever he did he made it appear to be the best thing that could ever have happened. Naturally, he claimed Kaul to be an officer of extraordinary qualities. "Nehru had declared in parliament that Kaul was one of our best Generals."²⁸ Unfortunately the latter was universally disliked in the army. This is what a few army officers have to say.

An army officer writes, "Unfortunately, most of our senior officers stagnated and, to top it all, we had a pseudo pacifier as our Prime Minister.....Nehru started intrigues within the top brass of the army, and thus began the phenomenal, brief and tragic rise and fall of Lt. Gen. B.M. Kaul, who was not only a fellow Kashmiri Brahmin but had many of the attributes of Nehru. He was in fact a Nehru acolyte in uniform, who would have been most suitable in any other profession than the army.....What is pertinent however is that Kaul had no war experience and was too emotional, erratic and wavering during crisis situations, like his patron Nehru;"²⁹ Dalvi writes, "The fact remains that by 1959, he did not have the qualifications that would be required to be adjudged 'outstanding'.....He superseded at least six officers to be the Chief of the General Staff."³⁰

Another army officer writes, "In the annals of modern military history, there is no precedence of an officer from the services being in charge of an army's operational planning and later the Corps. Commander of the formation committed to fight the enemy. He headed both courtesy his closeness to Nehru, a kinsman."³¹ Maxwell writes, "He aspired to and nearly reached the topmost

military office, only to be brought down in failure and disgrace.... Nehru was blind too, to the corrosive effect that his direct and open dealings with a junior officer had on discipline and morale in the officers corps. The damage this did only increased of course, as Kaul's rank advanced."³²

Kaul would intrigue against other officers. He was instrumental in starting an enquiry against Manekshaw. The former contacted JFR Jacob (Who retired as Lt. General.) to give evidence against Manekshaw. For doing so Kaul assured him that his future in the army would be secure and he would get any assignment in any part of the world that he desired. Jacob declined the offer. The enquiry found nothing against Manekshaw. All this shows the sort of games Kaul played.³³

Kaul's appointment was opposed in parliament but to no avail. "Kaul possessed none of the qualifications or experience necessary for that key post (CGS).....In parliament, Kripalani said that in Kaul's appointment he saw evidence of the 'hanky-panky'...But Menon coolly denied any interference in promotions, Nehru backed him up, and the protest died down."³⁴ The emergence of this gang of three (The Trio) would do irreparable damage to India's interests.

"Knowing Nehru's liking for B.M. Kaul, Menon appointed him Chief of the General Staff. Kaul was ambitious and courageous but was endowed with no sharp intelligence and was essentially a military bureaucrat, inexperienced in battle. Nehru unhesitatingly assumed responsibility for both selections (Thapar and Kaul)."³⁵

Kaul had taken the wrong course from the very beginning of his career in the army. And on his merits could never have risen very high. He did not fight in the Second World War. Dalvi writes, "Kaul was a pre-war regular officer and World War II had lasted for six years giving every professional an opportunity to practice his profession. Had he wanted to serve again in the Infantry, he could surely have arranged to do so."³⁶ Thorat writes, "Kaul was one of the few officers of his time who never served with combat troops in the field."³⁷ That was Kaul.

Menon: Nehru's Intellectual Giant.

Menon was another person in the good books of Nehru. He became defence minister in 1957. Like Kaul he also depended on Nehru for his position. As such it was possible to use him. The good salesman Nehru had projected him as an intellectual giant, whatever that meant. Unfortunately, hardly anybody in the army liked him. He was hardly fit to be the defence minister. He was whimsical and arrogant and very often treated the army personnel and others badly. Gopal writes, "Menon's abilities were ill-suited in the Indian setting. Histrionic and self-regarding, ostentatiously standing apart He was not fitted to the administrative position which Nehru clearly had in mind for him. But the full impact of Menon's presence in Delhi was still to come."³⁸

Menon antagonized many people with his high handed manner. "In 1950, he as high commissioner to Britain was to be introduced to senior officers of army taking courses in England. His first words on seeing them were, 'You Macaulay's grandchildren!' Gen. Verma said, 'I loved him ever since. It was the most uncalled for, unnecessary thing to say to officers of his own country.'³⁹ "His dependence on Nehru was matched only by his spite towards almost all others who were not his acolytes.....He dealt with the matter (Thimayya's resignation) in parliament in such a way as to strengthen Menon's position and shrink Thimayya's reputation."⁴⁰

"Krishna Menon was as vindictive as he was sarcastic. He once told Pulla Reddy (The defence secretary, an extremely senior ICS officer) at a meeting, where he was about a minute late, in front of about 20 other senior officers, 'You neither pull nor are you ready. What are you?' And Reddy took it. I (Lt. Gen. Verma) would have walked out. I have seen him take hold of a Sikh officer by his beard, and shake him and say, 'Sardar, you bloody fool, you don't know anything!'"⁴¹ Brigadier Dalvi had this to say, "His brilliant brain, acid wit and extraordinary memory were negated by his conceit, arrogance, vanity and his inability to suffer whomsoever he chose to consider a fool. He was extremely rude in his personal behaviour"⁴²

Intelligence Chief writes in his book, "Menon's vitriolic comments would freeze those who came with not too well-prepared

a case. And the higher the rank, the sharper became his tongue.”⁴³ Few in the army liked him. And Nehru claimed, “Menon had brought about a ‘complete reawakening’ in the army by giving it new light and spirit.”⁴⁴ Mankekar wrote that Menon had few friends in the country. This was to Nehru’s advantage. After the war Menon told Mankekar, “But the old man Nehru was getting perturbed, and the country’s morale was going to pieces. We had no Churchill. I don’t want to say anything more because it would amount to blaming Nehru...”⁴⁵

Nehru, the good salesman, needed him and knew how to project him. “Menon was by ‘far the ablest and the most outstanding figure in the United Nations”⁴⁶ Much was made of his long speeches at the U.N. Those speeches did not do any good to the country. And if making such big speeches was such a big thing why no other country followed him and why do we not emphasize on doing the same sort of thing today. Campaigning for Krishna Menon in Bombay in January 1962, Nehru declared, “I say that after Mr. Menon became the defence minister our defence forces have become for the first time a very strong and efficient fighting force. I say it with a challenge and with intimate knowledge.” It was a lie. The emphasis put by Nehru is worth noticing. That was his usual trend.

The actual position is described by Kaul, “I told B.K.Nehru we were woefully short of weapons and equipment, a fact with serious implications, although our government kept stating in the parliament and in public that our Armed Forces were strong enough to expel any aggressor from our territory. This claim, I said, with our antiquated and depleted weapons and logistics, at the time, was only a flight of their imagination and not a fact.”⁴⁷ Actually, the intellectual giant of Nehru had decided to manufacture hair clips and toys in defence establishments.⁴⁸

Menon was not on good terms with most of the army officers. “Thapar repeatedly had heated exchanges with Krishna Menon. In the summer of 1961, while addressing a gathering of middle ranking officers, the Minister declared: ‘Seventy-five percent of our difficulties come from the Chiefs of Staff. I am not saying they have not made up their minds, because they haven’t got minds to make up.’”⁴⁹ He had tried to bully Gen. Thimayya. Gen. Thorat

writes, "Mr. Menon began to harass Timmy more and more with a view to forcing him to carry out his whims and wishes, which Timmy refused to do. His methods were to be rude to him often in public, to sidestep him, and deal with his subordinate officers, to summon him to petty meetings to all odd hours of day.....But I did not realize the breaking point was so near. On 31st August 1959, Timmy tendered his resignation."

For Nehru Menon was more important than one of the best generals India ever had. "Nehru called Timmy to his house and playing on his emotions persuaded him to withdraw his resignation by promising 'to put things right' between him and Mr. Menon. The simple soldier agreed. Then Nehru did something which ill-behoved him. The next day he humiliated Thimayya in parliament and in the press."⁵⁰ Nehru's behaviour was disgusting and inexplicable. The country needed Thimayya, but Nehru needed Menon more for his own survival. Mountbatten had written to Nehru claiming Thimayya to be one of the best generals in the world.⁵¹ Thimayya was immensely popular with the ranks.

For his own personal reasons Nehru supported Menon. He silenced the critics of Menon in Congress in typical forceful manner, "Perfectly scandalous from any point of view, party or truth." That was before the war. "It is inconceivable that Nehru was unaware of the effect on the Defence organization of the Minister's abrasiveness and insulting behaviour. He should have been eased out of a responsibility far too sensitive and important for a man of his temperament, but Nehru stood by him to the last, as he had, in a smaller way, by Panikkar. Nehru must therefore share the responsibility for the incalculable damage done to the Defence organization at a time when *esprit de corps* was absolutely paramount. For all his brilliance, Krishna Menon was totally lacking in credibility even inside the narrow confines of his Ministry. Instead, Nehru turned the tables on Menon's detractors."⁵²

Otherwise Menon had few friends, "Throughout his career as a minister, he never practiced the virtue of humility. In the moment of humiliation, when Mr. Nehru was forced to sack him, we was friendless."

The Chinese Won't Attack

All that time China was busy with its encroachments. In the absence of any concrete steps taken by the Indian government, IB thought it wise to at least have a token presence on the borders. "The IB agreed with the MEA's assessment and sent a note on 26 September 1961, which made two salient points:

- (1) The Chinese wanted to come right up to their 1960 claim line where ever the territory was not under India's occupation.
- (2) But "when a dozen men of ours are present the Chinese have kept away" (that is, the Chinese have kept away, even when the territory was only under token occupation).

Having described Chinese incursions and other activities since June 1959, the IB note urged the army to fill the Ladakh vacuums that still existed, and to do so as soon as possible with tokens of Indian possession. A similar request was made for NEFA, where gaps along the McMahon Line needed to be filled. The IB note gave the impression that all this Indian activity was not likely to produce a major reaction from the Chinese."⁵³

That the Chinese activities had continued unabated is clear from the note the Indian government sent to the Chinese. "On 31st October 1961, India charged China of establishing three posts on Indian side. Two of them Nyagzu and Dambuguru were one mile and two miles respectively within Indian territory." On 20th November China replied that the boundary was most clear and definite. China was making practical use of a phrase loosely used by Nehru. Realizing the gravity of the situation, on October 31st Lt. Gen. S. D. Verma, GOC XV Corps, which was responsible for J&K and the ceasefire line with Pakistan received a message to take over the defence of Ladakh border as well.

He in turn sent his list of requirement to the Western Command for taking up this assignment. Defence ministry did not see any need for all that. Ministry only wanted to put the responsibility on the army without meeting its requirements. Lt. Gen. Verma had taken the gimmicks of Nehru and Menon too seriously. Menon at his face once called him an obstructionist. The whole approach was most casual. Lt. Gen. Verma was superceded

by a considerably junior officer at the time of promotion. He resigned.⁵⁴

If Nehru had expected the Chinese to behave with restraint then that hope had vanished. The Chinese were advancing menacingly. The uncooperative military generals were removed or retired. IB was of the opinion that the mere presence of Indian posts would stop the Chinese advance. Most importantly, Nehru was not capable of fighting the Chinese. He had a faithful defence minister and an army general to help him. He decided to put official seal on the forward policy.

“After consulting the Defence Minister and senior military and civilian officials, Nehru issued fresh and detailed instructions on 2 November 1961 for border policy. These instructions were based on a note from the Intelligence Bureau that the Chinese would move into areas claimed by them when there was no Indian presence, but would keep away if Indian personnel had established themselves.....No one questionedthe warning of the General Staff, that the army was in no position for such operations along the whole border, was ignored by Krishna Menon.”⁵⁵From Nehru’s speeches at this time, it is clear that he attached great importance to the establishment of these rear and ‘intermediate’ basis.....It was cautious, well-thought-out policy, envisaging action from secure basis, ‘because we must have a base whatever step we take. (Lok Sabha/ Rajya Sabha, 28 Nov. 1961) As usual the good salesman had assured the country that the forward policy was a well-thought-out policy. Actually, it was a step taken in panic, as he did not know how to check the Chinese. It was not a well-thought-out policy but a totally mindless policy.

An eminent military authority had said that whatever the political rights and wrongs involved may have been, the Indian forward posts were ‘militarily nonsensical’⁵⁶

Amazingly, even in 1961 Nehru did not deem it fit to give due importance to the logistic requirements of the army. The border roads were being built at a rate not worth the mention. The Chinese were always taking their roads up to the posts they had established. Rather than to worry about the logistic support the Indian reaction to the progress of the Chinese was to press for the forward

movement. "The Indian government only reacted by pressing for the implementation of the forward policy."⁵⁷

The Chinese as usual were busy encroaching upon more and more area. In the winters of 1961-62, Indian patrol had visited Galwan river valley and Nyingi pastures between Chang Chenmo River and Spanggur Lake. Up to then, the Chinese had not occupied that area. In twelve years from 1950 to 1962 India had not succeeded in establishing posts on the whole frontier; whereas the Chinese had taken full Tibet under control and had spread into areas claimed by India to be Indian territory.

Because of such situations Mullick was the advocate of forward policy for a long time, "Nehru consistently supported the so called forward policy, of which the originator and chief advocate was B. N. Mullick, the long-serving Director of the Intelligence Bureau. In essence the aim was to set up posts as close to the border as possible. To start with, these were manned by the Assam Rifles in NEFA and civil police in the north-western sector."⁵⁸

Kaul wholeheartedly supported the forward policy. "Forward policy, as it was popularly referred to In connection with some difficulties which GOC 33 Corps had raised, I went to Gauhati in February 1962 and held a conference attended by senior civil and military officials who were dealing with this question in NEFA. I told them why it was important for us to establish posts all along our borders and that failure on our part to do so would result in the Chinese establishing these posts instead."⁵⁹

In all fairness it can be said that while Nehru was absolutely not sorry for the loss of territory at the hands of China, Kaul and Mullick could not bear that their country's border was encroached with impunity by China. Although forward policy was no answer to that! Like so many of his gimmicks, forward policy was turned into one more by Nehru. None of his gimmicks had a chance in front of the Chinese statecraft. These were hardly the best arms to fight with if a war broke out with the Chinese. It was unfortunate that such a thoroughly crooked policy was being implemented, and Nehru had of all persons found an army general to implement it.

In April 1962, India charged China that it had established a post six miles from Sumdo. The later replied that the post was

deep inside Chinese territory and thirty kilometers from the traditional customary Sino-Indian boundary line. China was using the term that India had earlier found convenient to use. It did not give the exact location of the boundary-line and prepared ground to move another thirty kilometers into Indian territory. From the very beginning China went on encroaching upon Indian territory and India limited itself to protesting and nothing else.

In April 1962, Indian troops also started establishing some posts in Ladakh. As the Chinese were active encroaching upon Indian areas for long and had occupied thousands of sq. miles, the government forced the army to move in. Although from the very beginning the army was not keen to set up posts unless logistic support was made available. "From April, 1962, army units from Daulat Beg Oldi started moving eastwards and setting up posts along the Depsang plains and the Chip Chap river valley and within a couple of miles of the Chinese posts."⁶⁰ Next month the Intelligence Bureau reported to the government, "The Chinese would try to occupy the territory within their claimed line of 1960, which was much further west than the claim line of 1956."⁶¹ In spite of assurances by Nehru, almost nothing was done by way of roads, weapons and increase in the strength of armed forces. So he had no way to stop the Chinese. Only what he could do was to keep back as much information from the public as he could.

Nehru had said, "We must maintain our dignity, and at the same time deal with the situation as firmly as we can. Our Defence Forces are fully seized of the matter and they are not people who get excited quickly. They are brave and experienced people and if they have to deal with a difficult job, they will deal with it in a calm, quiet but efficient way."

As usual this was a misleading statement. Defence forces had a very good record up to then but the policies of the government had made them ineffective. "It is extremely distressing to write in this vein about Mr. Nehru..... I have often regretted the fact that I became involved in a situation that revealed his shortcomings..... To oppose him was political suicide; to express contrary views was the termination of even the most brilliant official career..... He misled the nation in various statements which he made from time to time."⁶²

“The country and parliament were at that stage appraised by Nehru of a certain aggression which had taken place in our territory. A vehement cry went up for their eviction from the same politicians who were incensed by the demands for increased defence expenditure till the late fifties. In early May 1962, Chinese troops advanced menacingly in assault formation on the new Indian post in the Chip Chap valley. A suggestion from the Western Command to withdraw this post, had Nehru a firm believer in the Chinese bluff being called, refused. The Chinese did not attack and withdrew. Nehru’s judgment had been vindicated and the basic premise of the Forward Policy confirmed.

With forward policy Nehru had turned the border into a playground for musical chairs. Further emboldened, Kaul ordered a patrol into the upper reaches of Galwan River, despite Lt. Gen. Daulat Singh’s protests. The Gurkha platoon did a stupendous job, after a month of marching in the most inhospitable terrain from Hot Spring, they cut off a post of the Chinese. Supplied by air and with the threat of instant annihilation, the planners paid no heed to the veterans on the ground, who did not want their soldiers to be sacrificed. The Chinese lodged a series of protests but these were brushed aside by Nehru. On 10 July, a battalion of Chinese advanced towards the Gurkhas in assault formation. Their warnings, appeals and propaganda on loudspeaker hailers, evoked a cool response. The Gurkhas cocked their rifles and lay low, awaiting the battle.

The attack did not come, but the Gurkhas were surrounded and had to be maintained by air for three months. From July 11 onwards the press was euphoric and paid accolades to Nehru for his original thinking which had resulted in one-fourth of the occupied territory being in Indian hands due to his brilliant Forward Policy. Kaul basked in the euphoria. The Forward Policy was further pursued, a poor substitute for defence and a sure igniter for an ill prepared conflict.”⁶³

To the army commanders except Kaul forward policy was a dangerous game. “In mid August 1962, the GOC-in-C, Western Command, Lt. Gen. Daulat Singh, however struck a jarring note.....The deployment pattern of the existing small Indian force

in Ladakh had meant claiming territory by 'show of flag' rather than by tactical considerations.... Gen. Daulat Singh warned that if the present race for the establishment of posts was continued, the Chinese would outrun us in every sector and at every stage."⁶⁴ So engrossed was the trio in the implementation of the forward policy that it had no time for such sane advice. Thorat had displeased Menon and Nehru with his views as to how to face a war with China if it at all came. He had to pay dearly for his views. "Because of which I had incurred the displeasure of the Defence Minister, and therefore, of the Prime Minister, and had to abandon all hope of becoming the Army Chief."⁶⁵

Notes were exchanges between both the sides. These notes were indeed a proof of what China had achieved in real terms. India was left to protest and do nothing more. "A Chinese note of 8 July 1962 accused India of setting up 'a new base for aggression' in the Galwan Valley. The Indian response was equally sharp. Galwan was 28 miles to the west of the 1956 claim line, which the Chinese premier had said was correct. If, as the Chinese claimed, they had set up a post in this valley, it constituted 'a serious violation of Indian territory which must be vacated.'Complaints of aggressive action by both sides covered the entire north-western sector from Chip Chap to Galwan in the north to Nyagzu near the Pangong Lake in the south-east."⁶⁶. As the Chinese had seen again and again what response from the Indian side had been in the last twelve years, they had nothing to worry about. Other than sending notes Nehru had taken no other action. Neither had he stopped the Chinese encroachment nor had he retrieved a single inch of territory in all those years. The protest notes were worthless pieces of paper. The relations between the forces of both the countries were deteriorating. The situation was becoming explosive in a few places.

In Ladakh, "On 10th July 1962, some three hundred Chinese troops surrounded our Galwan post of about 40 Gorkhas.....Chinese tried every trick short of a direct assault to intimidate, cajole and isolate the post.....The Chinese did not lift the seize. The post was overrun in October 1962."⁶⁷ Nehru was not capable of stopping the Chinese from their actions. For public consumption in India, he created an impression as if he was well

prepared to face the Chinese. "Nehru was full of fighting spirit. In a speech at Allahabad on 27th July, he declared that, thanks to an energetic programme of road construction, India's position in the border areas had greatly improved, and she could 'give a good fight to the Chinese.' But the generals had fewer illusions.....Nehru gave orders that no post was on any account to be abandoned."⁶⁸

Although Nehru himself was taking the course that would lead to disaster, he would not leave behind his rhetorics. "Nehru rebuked those who had 'the temerity to suggest that we are going to take some action which would bring dishonour to India,' rather than which he would prefer to be 'reduced to dust and ashes."⁶⁹ Unfortunately the day was not far off when his actions would bring dishonour to the country.

The posture India had adopted in the prevailing situation was not in the interest of the country. The forward policy became India's answer to China's encroachments. Whereas China went on increasing its military might and developing logistics; India was destined to establish posts without any military strength to maintain them. Real gains were only for China to enjoy.

Somewhere along the line, Nehru became a victim of his illusions. He got the idea that he was capable of challenging the Chinese. He decided to show to his people his ability to fight. The Indian action near the tri-junction of India Tibet and Bhutan was going to lead to war between India and China. On instructions from the government of India in July, 1962, Dhola post in Arunachal Pradesh was occupied by Indian forces (Assam Rifles). On 8th September, 1962 it was surrounded by the Chinese. Two days later they withdrew. They concentrated on the Thagla Ridge. India decided to send more troops to Dhola. Orders from the government forced 9th Punjab to reach Dhola on 16th September. Nehru declared his intention of throwing away the Chinese from Thagla. Chinese had made it clear that they were not going to vacate Thagla. In case a war broke out between the two countries India was not at all prepared to take on the enemy. As if the forward policy was not enough to create trouble for India, Nehru and his team decided to invite further trouble!

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End of the Delusion

Thagla: The Murderous Adventure

Appetite of the Chinese was insatiable. May be Nehru had hoped that once they had taken over Tibet they would leave India in peace. That did not happen. Encroachments started taking place. Unable to check them; Nehru hid their activities from the public. But then their activities took such a gigantic shape that he had to inform the Lok Sabha in 1959. At that very time the Chinese started advancing menacingly. The government was forced to speed up the establishment of posts near the McMahon Line.

It is amazing that it was decided way back in 1950, that the posts would be established on the border. But even up to the beginning of 1962, the task was not completed. In contrast the Chinese had created a network of roads on the whole border with India. In the Thagla region in the absence of logistic support, the army was not keen on moving more troops to the border. Small posts without any logistic support would not serve any purpose. So the government sent Kaul to speed up the matter. He reached Tezpur in June 1962 and met Div. Commander Maj. Gen. Niranjan Prasad there.

Maj. Gen. Prasad said, "I again put up my views on Operation Omkar stating that tactically these posts would be of no value; and administratively they would be untenable in operations, probably even in peacetime. His reply to me was brusque and final: 'The Prime Minister himself had ordered these posts to be set up and he had his decision on the highest Intelligence advice.' Also, explicit in his reply was a warning that failure or dragging of feet in completing the task could result in serious consequences for those responsible—in other words, for 4 Infantry Division. So that was that."¹ That was in June 1962 and Kaul had not yet been appointed Corps Commander. It is clear he was in league with Nehru and Menon.

Brig. Dalvi was in agreement with Gen. Prasad, "To my knowledge, Kaul had gone there to brow-beat and bully the doubtful

generals who had misgivings about the whole idea of setting up forward posts. I know that from the Corps Commander down to my self as the Brigade Commander we had grave reservations about the wisdom of this new policy.”² The army was reluctant to make a move. But there was constant pressure from the government to establish and maintain posts. The limited numbers of forces with no arms worth mentioning was being forced to spread into a large area.

As part of the forward policy, a post was to be established in the Thagla region. An army column was sent to establish a post on the India-Tibet-Bhutan tri-junction across Namkachu stream. The political officer with the column said that Thagla on the north of the stream was Indian territory. In the absence of proper maps the column established a post south of the stream on 19th July. It came to be known as Dhola Post. The column sent a report to the Divisional Headquarters. They in turn informed the Corps, Command and Army Headquarters. Reply was not quick in coming. Before any reply came or was ever sent; the Chinese occupied the Thagla Ridge by the middle of August.

They went further. They surrounded the Dhola post on 8th September. The same day Nehru went to London. Next day, on 9th September a meeting was held by Menon, at which it was decided to evict the Chinese from Thagla. Nehru endorsed the decision. This casually taken decision was destined to have grave repercussion in days to come.

Nehru was in tune with Menon. His declaration, “India’s position in the border areas had greatly improved, and she could ‘give a good fight to the Chinese.’”³ was a blatant lie. India was not at all prepared for a fight. But somehow Nehru and his team had decided to challenge the Chinese. The later made it amply clear that they had no intention of leaving Thagla. On the Indian side a suggestion was floating in the air that the Chinese would never go to war with India. That was definitely not the handiwork of the Chinese. Indian Intelligence is said to have floated that idea. The forces on the border could not afford such loose talk and were clear that the Chinese would react violently if any action was taken against them at Thagla.

Removing the Chinese from Thagla was a mind-boggling exercise devoid of any sensible thinking. The armed forces were not at all prepared to fight the Chinese because they knew that the forces had not been prepared for a fight. And why was Thagla of all places selected? As per the principle on which the McMahon Line was drawn; Thagla should have been in India. But the borderline as drawn on the old map showed it in Tibet. China was determined to retain it. Nehru never went to war to stop China from grabbing thousands of sq. miles of land shown in maps as Indian territory where it had no claim. And of all places he thought of taking a firm stand in the matter of Thagla where China had a reasonable claim! And then he had always pleaded for negotiations. But not in this case! He had decided to evict the Chinese from Thagla. If he succeeded then it would be the first instance of evicting the Chinese from any of their encroachments since they came to the Indian borders. Never before had he bothered to remove any of their encroachments.

What could have been the reason for Nehru's confidence? By the end of 1959, when the Chinese were in effective control of 5000 sq. miles of Indian territory; Nehru was saying, "It is not the yard of territory that counts but the coercion. It makes no difference to China or India whether a few yards of territory in the mountains are on this side or on that side. But it makes a great deal of difference if that is done in an insulting, aggressive, offensive, violent manner, by us or by them."⁴ It is worth noting that the Chinese were in effective control of 5000 sq. miles and Nehru was speaking of a few yards.

China had noticed earlier that Nehru had not stopped it from encroachments and had kept it a secret. But he had protested violently when conflict between the two sides had taken place. So conflicts had to be avoided if China wanted to make further encroachment smoothly. It proceeded in a quiet manner to grab another 5000 sq. miles of Indian territory in the next three years. It was careful not to start any conflict with the Indian forces. Wherever they found Indians confronting them; they stopped and did not start a quarrel. They proceeded elsewhere to continue

encroachment. After all there was too much area lying unguarded for grabbing. This created a wrong impression in the mind of Nehru that the Chinese would not fight under any provocation. For long IB also held the same view. If the Chinese were not going to attack then Nehru had a chance to prove his valour. The die was cast.

Troops which had been surrounded at Dhola on 8th September needed reinforcement. Additional forces could reach Dhola only by 16th September to relieve the column there. From 8th September onwards, ignoring the chain of command, orders were sent to the forces on the border from Eastern Command and Army Headquarters. No records were made of the orders in the name of secrecy. Eastern Army Commander, Lt. Gen Sen visited Tezpur on 12th September. He made it clear that the Chinese had to be evicted from Thagla as it was Indian territory. It seems he had decided to swim with the tide and not antagonize the trio. Corps Commander was of the view that the Chinese could not be challenged in the given circumstances. From Tezpur, Gen. Sen started ordering the forces directly. Gen. Prasad resented that. Sen had heated arguments with the Corp. Commander. The tension was taking its toll of the cadres.

On the insistence of the government the plan to evict the Chinese was on. To give shape to the eviction plan, 1/9 Gorkha Rifles which had proceeded to a peace station was recalled and was asked to move to the frontier in most distressing circumstances. "1/9 GR was made to march back up the hill, with full equipment, all 230 miles of the way back to Towang. No transport was provided to lift the men even in shuttles. No warm clothing was provided to them; the troops were still wearing their olive green summer uniforms (into which they had changed when their warm clothing was taken away from them prior to their move out of NEFA). Once they reached Dhola there was no way they could be issued with warm clothing; and subsequently, serving at 15-16,000 feet at the onset of winter, many of them died of pneumonia and other pulmonary disorders even before the fighting started."⁵ This was not the only incidence of its kind.

The Chinese were not deceiving anybody and asked the Indian troops to move back. Some skirmishes took place on 18th

September. It was clear that the Chinese were well prepared. Indian troops were in the process of moving to the frontier. Near the border at Lumpu Maj. Gen. Prasad found them in low spirits. "The general atmosphere was gloomy. Many of the troops had marched all the way up from Foothills, 230 miles away, and were tired, hungry, ill-clad and not in their highest morale."⁶ The troops were not at all equipped to face the enemy. Winter was fast approaching. Rations and ammunitions had to be accumulated. Mostly it could be done only with helicopters which were rarely available because of the bad weather. Twelve years had passed and the roads were far away from the borders.

The number of troops was not adequate to attack Thagla. Totally unmindful of the requirements and preparedness of the army; the government wanted the Chinese to be evicted from Thagla at the earliest. The Corps Commander Lt. Gen. Umrao Singh was not ready to sacrifice the forces. He would only act when the forces were ready. "Umrao, in his forthright manner, recorded his written opinion that the operation was 'just not on.'"⁷

The government was determined to act. Up to then even a written order had not been issued to the army for the job to be accomplished. Army demanded the order in writing. On 22nd September 1962, the army received the orders, "The Army Headquarters were given the following orders signed by a joint secretary: The decision throughout has been as discussed at previous meetings, that the army should prepare and throw out the Chinese as soon as possible. The Chief of the Army Staff was accordingly directed to take action for the eviction of the Chinese in the Kameng Frontier Division of NEFA as soon as he is ready."⁸ The order was given in a most casual manner when the crisis was already on head. That only showed the ignorance of Nehru and his team regarding army matters. A lot of preparation was needed before any such task could be undertaken.

In 1959, it was clear that a conflict with the Chinese was a distinct possibility. "Early 1963, General Choudhuri, Thapar's successor, told John Lall that, three years before the war, the Chiefs of staff had asked the government for a direction dealing specifically with the new situation on the Himalayan frontier. But no order was given then. After more than three years the abrupt 'directive' of 22nd September was all the army ever got."⁹

It was strange that Nehru wanted the Chinese to be evicted when he would be on his longest trip outside India between 7th and 30th September. Krishna Menon also left on the 18th September. On his return from trip abroad Nehru did not like the reluctance of the Corps Commander to move his troops to the border. He was determined to confront the Chinese. "At a meeting on 1st October, he was furious when told of the army's inaction, and heard yet again the Army Chief's oft-repeated refrain of 'grave repercussions'. He did not care, he declared if the Chinese came as far as Delhi; they had to be driven out of Thagla."¹⁰ After the war, Nehru told Lok Sabha that the army had moved on its own.

Kaul on the Move

Gen. Sen the army commander was under pressure to act. He told Maj. Gen. Prasad on the 2nd of October, "The Defence Minister wanted the operation to be completed 'at the earliest' and any delay in mounting the operations would result in dire consequences for all concerned."¹¹ Sen was under pressure from the trio; and he in turn was bullying the forces under him to move fast. "Army Commander, whatever his motives for issuing all these impossible plans and orders."¹² Lt. Gen. Sen said on confronting an adamant Maj. Gen. Prasad, "In case you do not know, I am getting Biji Kaul as my new IV Corps Commander and he does not allow the grass to grow under his feet."¹³ Prasad had heard of Kaul's reputation and his nearness to Menon and Nehru.

As Gen. Umrao Singh was not enthusiastic to carry out the government orders a way was found to remove him from the scene of action. "Defence Minister felt that rather than change the Corps Commander, which could have political repercussions, a new corps should be raised to undertake the task of evicting the Chinese."¹⁴ Kaul was appointed as the Corps Commander. Actually no new corps was raised. On the ground the forces remained the same. Only it got a new Commander with his staff and a new name; IV Corps. XXXIII Corps was to be shifted somewhere else. A good

way of getting rid of Gen. Umrao Singh! The last stumbling block was removed.

Kaul was not the best choice. Brigadier Dalvi wrote, "Mr. Nehru made many unfortunate choices and took many questionable decisions, but none more disastrous than the championship of Kaul and his appointment as commander of the so-called task force to evict the Chinese from NEFA in October 1962." But Kaul was indispensable for Nehru. "Kaul, who had insisted on proceeding on leave because of strained relations with Krishna Menon, was immediately recalled, as if he alone could have saved the situation."¹⁵ On appointment Kaul reached Tezpur. He was thundering that he had been sent by the highest authorities of the land and all had to listen to him. Then he moved towards the frontiers. "Kaul flew to Lumpu on Oct 5, where it appeared that he intended to stay on till the completion of the operation."¹⁶ He directly ordered the Brigade Major to move the brigade to Namka Chu. "This was not a very auspicious start to his dealings with my Division."¹⁷ This direct order to move troops.

Prasad knew Kaul well and on meeting him on the 6th remarked, "What brings you here Biji? We had heard that you are on the way up, but this place can only lead you downwards!" If Kaul had any misgivings, Gen. Prasad briefed him about the ground reality. On the Indian side there was steep shortage of forces, rations, arms and equipment. The Chinese were every way prepared as an armed force. There was no comparison between the two sides. It did not do much good.

Along with Kaul, Menon was also actively involved in the action. "In September-October 1962 Mr. Menon became a sort of field commander and was reported to be holding regular briefing conferences..... He did not formulate any overall policy and he did not give any formal orders. He did not allow any minutes to be kept of his numerous conferences."¹⁸

In his preface for 'From reveille to Retreat' by Gen. Thorat, Gen K.V.Krishna Rao has this to say, "This national disaster might have been avoided, or at least its effects might have been softened, if only the Defence Minister had given credit to soldiers for knowing more about war than he himself claimed to know."¹⁹ But it was Nehru who was using Kaul and Menon as he had used Panikkar

earlier. They were doing what Nehru wanted them to do. Nehru and Menon had relied on Kaul's abilities to take on the Chinese. The government expected the eviction over by the 10th of October. Kaul decided to move to Namka Chu. As Corps Commander there was no need for him to be so close to the enemy. It appears that he was convinced that the Chinese would behave like good boys and not attack.

On way to the border Kaul was exhausted and could not negotiate the heights and had to be carried by porters. He had brought an oxygen cylinder and had to use it very often. On 7th Kaul reached Dhola. On the opposite side of the Namka Chu the Chinese could be seen. "We could see the Chinese and their activities clearly. Enviously we watched their mule trains arrive, unload in leisurely fashion and return up the mountainside. They had mechanical saws with which to cut the trees to make sleepers. Their trenches were well sited, with regular fields of fire in front of each. They seemed friendly and at intervals shouted out to us to send for our Political Officer so that they could negotiate with him."²⁰ The Chinese were not deceiving in any way whatsoever.

In comparison to the Chinese the Indian side was short of everything. "In contrast, we had herded our 7 Brigade into restricted camps, some kitted in the lightest of summer clothing, provisioned with the barest of rations, and carrying not more than half an hour's battle-worth of ammunition. And our declared aim was soon to attack and repulse a well prepared Chinese brigade established on a higher mountain ridge than ours!"²¹ Brigade Commander Dalvi briefed Kaul about the logistical situation. There was shortage of all types. Kaul told them of his mission to evict the Chinese.

Kaul was not capable of taking on such an assignment. He had never before fought a war. He had reached so far by getting out of turn promotion over the heads of experienced generals. He had taken on the assignment but must have repented later on seeing the ground reality. Once he took up the job it was not possible to leave it. "Even Kaul did not appear to have made a proper estimate of the threat facing him when he took over as the Corps Commander.....There was need for thorough discussion at the Army Headquarters of the steps that could be taken.....He seemed to have jumped into the fire bravely but blindly and after showing

a tremendous initial spurt of energy of moving the troops forward to the Namka Chu stream, the reaction set in....and so had lost heart even before the fighting commenced.”²²

He informed the Army HQ of the difficulties and also that he was doing his best to accomplish the task. “However, he ended the signal with his usual ambiguous type of statement—that though the Chinese were in a far superior position and could dislodge 7 Brigade from its position he, General Kaul, was taking every possible step to evict the Chinese!”²³ It appears he had planted the idea of the adventure in the mind of Nehru and Menon and was trapped on taking on the assignment himself. Otherwise, had he been free to speak out his mind he should have made it clear to Nehru and Menon that the task was impossible and full of dangerous possibilities. Or may be he was still convinced that the Chinese won’t attack even under provocation. Whatever the case was, he could not bring himself to declare that the operation was a miscalculation with grave consequences and needed to be dropped immediately. “However, Kaul felt that he had to produce something out of his hat in an attempt to justify the faith Krishna Menon and Pandit Nehru had placed in him.”²⁴

The Trailer

Whatever the reasons, Kaul wanted to send a battalion across Namka Chu in spite of everybody advising otherwise. On persuasion from Gen. Prasad he agreed to first send a patrol of 50 men across Namka Chu. Kaul agreed to send a patrol. It established itself at Sinjing (Tseng Jong) unopposed. The Chinese did not attack. Kaul’s stand was vindicated. It was 8th October. He had two more days to evict the Chinese. Dalvi found him ecstatic. Kaul’s joy knew no bounds. As the Indian troops were by the side of Namka Chu, Prasad suggested moving the troops to a better position on the hill. But for Kaul time had come to send the troops to Thagla and not to a safe position.

He decided that 2 Rajput Battalion would cross Namka Chu on 10th October in the morning and establish itself on Thagla Ridge. This was the date by which the government wanted to evict the Chinese. He would do it provided the Chinese obliged him. The Chinese seemed in no mood of doing so. On the night of 9-10 the Chinese troops were moving towards the India patrol with torch-lights. Kaul was stunned. So they were still giving time to the Indian patrol to go back to where they had come from two days back.

On the morning of 10th when the 2 Rajput was about to cross the Namka Chu the Chinese attacked the Indian patrol. More than two thousand Chinese were seen on Thagla. Indian troops fought well and asked for machine-gun and mortar support from main position as would have been expected in war. If that was done then the Chinese would have attacked Dhola. So no cover was provided to the patrol. Fighting stopped when the ammunition of Indian patrol was spent. The Chinese behaved well. "Thereafter the Chinese had a clear run, with no opposition. However, to give them their due they did not actually assault our helpless troops with the bayonet, nor indulge in indiscriminate killing. According to the account of the survivors, they allowed the defeated garrison to withdraw honourably and take with them their weapons and their dead."²⁵ Dalvi wanted to know if 2 Rajput was to cross Namka Chu. By then Kaul had had enough. He called off the operation.

Prasad and Dalvi then tried to convince Kaul that the higher ups needed to be told that the eviction of the Chinese was impossible under the given circumstances. He was again requested to allow the forces to withdraw from the exposed river line to safer Hathung La ridge nearby. Kaul did not agree. As a result many soldiers were destined to die as sitting ducks in the open on 20th October. Even the Chinese, who were fully prepared were not stationed by the river-bed. They had taken safe positions on the Thagla ridge.

Kaul had enough of fighting. Within an hour he left Dhola never to return again. On the way back again he had to be carried on porter's back. He could not make much progress. The next day a helicopter carried him to Tezpur. Ordinary soldiers were not so lucky when they needed medical help because of the deeds of the Trio.

In the first place the very idea of evicting the Chinese was utterly foolish. At least, after the happening of the 10th October, it should have left no illusions what so ever in the mind of any body who mattered. On 12th October, Nehru again reiterated the desire of the government to remove the Chinese from Thagla. "The announcement hit me like a bludgeon. I found it hard to believe that any responsible person let alone a statesman of international repute could publicly make such an irresponsible operational pronouncement. Whatever else was sought to be achieved, one certain result of the publicity given to Nehru's statement would be to compromise the security of our plans and thus the security of the troops up at the front.....If Nehru had declared his intention to attack, then the Chinese were not going to wait to be attacked."²⁶ After the war was over, Gen. Thapar told Prasad that the Prime Minister had ordered the offensive on Thagla.

Even a year earlier, Nehru had boasted in a similar manner. He told Lok Sabha on 28th Nov. 1961, "We have to throw them out but we should do so only when the right time comes."²⁷

Prasad went to Tezpur and found Kaul in bed on 15th. He told Prasad, "The Director of the Intelligence bureau, Mr. R. N. Mullick, still insisted that there were only about 200 'Ill armed and half starved' Chinese on Thagla ridge. 'So the conundrum still remains', Biji added, 'We have to attack Thagla eventually'²⁸ What ever Mullick told him, he must have seen the preparedness of his own troops with his own eyes. It appears he was unable to dismount the tiger at that moment. He must have told the government that the task could be completed only if arms and other supplies were made available; because the next day Prasad saw parachutes every where on the Tsangdhar ridge near Dhola. So the government was making available the goods. Most of the goods were falling by the hillside and could not be collected. Even otherwise the forces were asked to collect the things themselves. They had to march for five hours to reach the ridge, collect whatever they could, then go back and then take up night security duty. Everything was in a mess.

On 17th October Menon and Sen were in Tezpur. Dalvi wanted the troops to be drawn back as it was not possible to keep them fed. In addition there was shortage of arms and ammunition. Most

of the troops had ammunition for half an hour fight. Gurkhas were still in summer clothing in chilling winter. Dalvi was ordered to stay where he was. It was a murderous act. On 18th Kaul had to be evacuated to Delhi because of illness. But he was not relieved of his post. This was not disclosed to Prasad.

“So we arrived at the perfectly ludicrous situation in which a corps confronting an enemy on the eve of impending operations continued to be commanded by a very sick man confined to his bed nearly a thousand miles away. I understand that the defence minister insisted on this arrangement; and the Army Chief acquiesced. It seems the army no longer had a will of its own.”²⁹

The Chinese could see the activities on the Indian side. So they were also prepared. There was no deceit on their part. Their soldiers had not come to the border for a picnic. Their roads along the borders were not laid for tourists. “The Chinese made no attempts to conceal their movements, as far as I could see.”³⁰ On 19th October Prasad was ordered to send one company to the north of Namka Chu. “It was bitter to recall that it was our own policy that had provided all the provocation that the enemy needed, at least on the Namka Chu.”³¹ The Chinese could see the preparations on the Indian side. They also had their spies on the Indian side. They must have come to know that the Indian troops were planning to attack.

The Chinese Attack-1

On 20th October at 5.15 a.m. the Chinese attacked. At Namka-chu they started with an artillery barrage. The soldiers followed. They could rightly claim that their action was to preempt Indian attack. Within hours it was all over; the Chinese had overcome all resistance. The reason was that the little ammunition that the soldiers had; lasted for an hour or so. The soldiers were in high spirits but were helpless. Kaul had ordered them by the side of the river. They were easy target for the Chinese. There was no

arrangement to attend to the casualties. The trio had led them in to a deathtrap. The soldiers lost their lives not for their fault but because of the trio's unimaginably crooked ideas. After the attack no help whatsoever could be made available to the fighting forces from behind.

From 2 Rajput, 9 officers and JCOs and 268 other ranks were killed. One officer and 23 other ranks were wounded. 9 Punjab, 1/9 Gorkha Rifles and 5 Assam Rifles together accounted for 8 officers and JCO, and 7 other ranks killed and 32 other ranks wounded. As per another account, "An unquestioning Rajput battalion of 513 men reduced in four hours to 282 killed and 171 captured, including 81 wounded. Only 60 returned to tell the poignant tale of the piece—ill-clothed, ill-equipped and grossly outnumbered Indian soldiers paid for the Himalayan Blunder of the political leadership and a pliant army high command in the 1962 Sino-Indian conflict."³² The casualty figure was very high from any angle.

From the very beginning the futility of the operation was clear to the forces. "The state and mind of the rank and file of 2 Rajput must also be taken into account. The unit had been diverted from a fully earned peace move, and pushed into an unreal and visibly impossible situation from the time they left the plains of Assam. Every man could plainly see how the situation was devoid of common military sense."³³ Still the soldiers fought well. The blood of these soldiers is on the hands of the trio.

The Chinese attacked Bumla on 23rd October.

The opinion of Gen. Harbaksh Singh and the like was correct. China attacked the Indian forces throughout the border from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh. And everywhere Indian troops were defeated. The policies of Nehru had turned one of the best armies in the world into a spineless force. The posts fell like pack of cards. China attacked everywhere because it knew of the weakness of such posts. The number of troops involved in fighting was 6,000. And even this small number was not at all well armed. And Nehru had the cheek to claim again and again through out the years that the country was prepared to give China a fitting reply. He had claimed that the war with China would last long. Through out the years he had lied with impunity.

Now the truth was there for all to see. But Nehru had manipulated the whole thing in such a manner that the blame was laid at the door of Menon, Kaul, and Mullick. No doubt they had their share of blame. But Nehru was the mastermind behind them. He had brought them to the fore. He had claimed them to be of the best in their spheres. He had continuously protected them if they were criticized. And he had used them for his own purpose. Throughout the years his misdeeds were exposed but he got away with them. He took advantage of the goodwill he had with the public. After the defeat he did not leave his chair. As he was not removed he manipulated to remain in power. He hoped against hope that his manipulations would see him through. In the process he did irreparable damage to the interest of the country. He claimed that the Chinese cheated India. Well, let the readers decide as to who cheated whom?

Who was to Blame?

After the reverses of 20th October Nehru made a speech on the All India Radio. "A situation has arisen which calls upon all of us to meet it effectively... We must gird up our loins and face this greatest menace which has come to us since we became independent... I am grieved at the set-backs to our troops that have occurred on this frontier and the reverses that we have had. They were overwhelmed by vast numbers and by big artillery, mountain guns and heavy mortars which the Chinese forces have brought with them.... The conflict may continue for long."³⁴ What did Nehru expect the Chinese to bring if not guns? He spoke as if he was the spokesman of the government rather than the architect of the disaster. As per Brig. Sharma, "Nehru was the producer, story writer, the actor, director and the distributor of this great Indian tragedy."

On 8th November 1962, a resolution was passed in Lok Sabha on Chinese aggression. On the occasion Nehru spoke, "For five years we have been the victims of Chinese aggression across our

frontiers in the north. That aggression was, to begin with, rather furtive. Occasionally there were some incidents and conflicts. These conflicts might well be termed frontier incidents. Today we have seen a regular and massive invasion of our territory by very large forces.....It has shocked us, as it has shocked a large number of countries....Certainly India, this dear land of ours, will never submit to it, whatever the consequences.

We accept the challenge in all its consequences....But the point is that they have invaded an area which has not been in their possession ever in the history of the last 10,000 years...If they had any claim they could have discussed it and talked about it and adopted various means of peaceful settlement....This crisis is none of our making or seeking. It is China which has sought to enforce its so-called territorial claims by military might.”³⁵

The above speech makes interesting reading. It is a fine specimen of half-truths. The five years of aggression was not furtive. It was a blunt act. It was not some conflict. It was firm occupation. He was shocked time and again. Earlier Nehru was surprised why China and India did not come to conflict for the last 2,000 years. Now he knew why? Because the Chinese had not been there in the last 10,000 years! So they could not fight. It was Nehru who was responsible for them to be on our frontier. He was speaking of peaceful means. Chinese wanted exactly that. It was Nehru who had boasted of throwing them. The crisis was invited by him. He accepted that the Chinese were active for the last five years. It was clear that he was not capable of facing the Chinese and had allowed them to constantly encroach upon our territory.

On 14th November he made another speech in Lok Sabha. “Much has been said about our un-preparedness. I do not seek to justify any error that we might have committed, but I do think, that many Hon. Members have done an injustice, not to this minister or that, but to our armed forces as a whole, in making various charges. I hope to disabuse their minds by stating some facts.

The one fact as I said, is that our whole mentality has been governed by an approach of peace....But there is such a thing as being conditioned in a certain way...Before the 20th October, it was not realized by the people at large what dangers possibly might

confront us....Mr. Frank Anthony, I think, said that we have been enabled to put up some kind of line of defence because we have received arms from abroad....It was with the existing equipment that they brought the Chinese advance to a standstill....We had slightly better arms, but they had better mortars to hit at from some distance....Our only fault, if it was a fault, was even to stick out where the military appraisal was not very favourable. It was not that we told them to stick out; it would be folly for any politician to say so. But our soldiers themselves have a reluctance to pull back, and they stuck on at considerable cost to themselves." It was lies and more lies all the way.

"I should like to lay stress on the general question of our preparedness, because some Hon. Members seem to think that we sent our soldiers barefoot and without proper clothing to fight in the NEFA mountains. It is really extraordinary to say that they were almost unarmed and barefooted."

"Some soldiers had been stationed there. Others were sent rather in a hurry in September. Our time for issuing winter clothes is about the middle of September. When the soldiers were sent, they went in full uniform—full warm uniform, woollen uniform—and every man had two good boots. As they were going, they were given three blankets apiece. Later on, the supply was raised to four blankets. But as they were going by air, and as these blankets took so much room, the officer in charge and the men themselves said: 'They take so much room and, therefore, send them later on to us.'"

"In fact those soldiers of ours who were permanently located there had snow boots in addition to regular boots....In any event, everyone had good stout army boots....The other charge made is about weapons, that the soldiers did not have proper weapons. The jawans who went there were supplied with all the normal equipment, that is, .303 rifles and the complement of automatic weapons such as light machine guns and medium machine guns. There has been some criticism about approach to a ceasefire. We have said that before we discuss anything, the Chinese forces must go back and restore the position as it existed before the 8th September."³⁶

Nehru was a habitual liar and had no compunction about

speaking lies. He spoke about conditioning in a particular way. It was correct regarding him. Not so about the army. We had thousands of years of tradition of fighting wars. Only the government had not prepared it well. He claimed that the Indian soldiers had better arms than the Chinese. The Chinese had automatic rifles and Indian soldiers had antiquated .303. The latter is found only in museums in many countries. It is absolutely no match to automatic or semi-automatic rifle. He said that the soldiers themselves were reluctant to move back. The fact is that orders to the forces were not to move back. Even the forces were not allowed to take a better position than the side of Namka Chu. It is a fact that there was acute shortage of arms and much other equipment. It is a fact that many soldiers were in summer uniform in biting cold and without adequate number of blankets. The Corps Commander had been changed before the war because he did not agree to send the troops to the frontier. Then Nehru was claiming that the forces had moved or stayed on their own. While Nehru was busy justifying his actions, the Chinese had important business to do!

China immediately started negotiations with India. It was not ready to forgo what it had gained. But it was at least ready to accept the McMahon Line. Zhou wrote to Nehru on 4.11.62, "As pointed out in the October 24 statement of the Chinese Government, the proposal for the armed forces of China and India to withdraw 20 kilometers each from the line of actual control and to disengage was first put forward by the Chinese Government back in 1959, to put it more specifically, in my letter to you dated Nov. 7, 1959. Now the Chinese Government has reiterated this proposal. The 'line of actual control' mentioned in the proposal is basically still the line of actual control as exists between the Chinese and the Indian side on Nov.7, 1959. To put it concretely, in the eastern sector it coincide in the main with the so called McMahon Line....."³⁷ Nehru was no match to Zhou. In one swap the latter had swallowed 7,000 sq. miles of Indian territory it had encroached upon between 1959 and the war and claimed that it was always with them.

He replied to Zhou on 14.11.62, ".....I do not want to go into the history of the last five years and the forcible, unilateral

alteration of the status of the boundary by the Chinese forces in the Western Sector, on which a mass of notes and memoranda have been exchanged between our two governments.....to advance a few hundred kilometers and then offer to withdraw 20 kilometers.....and now making a magnanimous offer to retaining the gains of the earlier aggressions plus such other gains as it can secure by negotiations from the latest aggressions.....aggressive, arrogant and expansionist neighbour.....your forces continued to forcibly occupy substantial areas of Indian territory even while these talks and discussions were going on.”³⁸ Along with it was attached a memoranda that gave details of Chinese encroachments. As usual, Nehru was left to grumble, lament and plead with the shrewd Chinese. For years he could not go beyond this.

The above-referred memorandum exposes Nehru completely. It said, “In 1959 (Nov.), Chinese posts in Western Sector were at Spanggur, Khurnak Fort, Kongka la and along the main Aksai Chin Road. Within three years ie by September 1962, the Chinese had constructed a large network of military roads and posts, beginning with posts opposite Daulat Beg Oldi in the North, along the Chip Chap valley and along the Galwan river to the Pangong and the Spanggur lake area. At certain points the network of military posts was more than one hundred miles to the west of Chinese positions in 1959.” What was Nehru doing when the Chinese were busy encroaching on such a large scale?

There was no use crying over spilt milk. China wanted to keep Aksai chin. It was of strategic importance to China. It was not going to offer the area on a platter. Force was needed to get it back. That was not possible. But it had specifically said that it was ready for giving concessions on McMahon Line. All the twelve years while China was advancing on the basis of military strength, Nehru was relying on gimmicks. Even now he was doing the same. He was arousing sentiment of the people. That would not work. When Zhou had come to settle the border issue in 1960, Nehru wanted China to withdraw to the 1959 position. Now when China wanted to settle the issue, he wanted them to go back to 8th September 1962 position. Hardly any thought was given to reach a settlement. A strong China was in a position to dictate to a weak India. China was wrong but was strong. Twelve precious years

had been wasted. It would take years of preparation to be able to meet China on equal footing. It was too strong for an unprepared India.

After the war Nehru analysed the reasons of defeat; as if he was an expert on the subject rather than the architect of defeat himself. Why did he not prepare the forces in the last twelve years? What was he doing when the Chinese were continuously encroaching into Indian territory? Why did he keep the country in the dark about the happenings on the border? Why had he again and again said that the country was well prepared to face the enemy?

Still Not Ready to Learn

It is a pity that even after such a defeat no lessons were learnt! After the attack the government took to the old ways as if the crisis was over. The army was treated in a casual manner. On the 24th of October Gen. Prasad was relieved of his post. "I felt shattered. It was such an unkind, heartless thing to do to a subordinate commander—this brusque dismissal in the middle of an operational situation, without any word of warning, without giving me any opportunity to defend myself. Sen must have known about this development for some time,..... this could not have happened except at Sen's instigation. I felt bitter and humiliated." It was all to the advantage of Nehru. The removal of some generals created an impression as if the generals were responsible for the defeat. The Prime Minister who was responsible for the defeat could not be touched because of his status. This was democracy at its worst. A country or society where the able are not rewarded and guilty not punished can never become great.

Immediately after the conflict, panic reaction set in. New commanders were appointed in place of the old ones. As if the commanders were at fault and not the trio. There was no good

reason for doing so and to no good effect. "There it was—the whole range of wisdom of the powers-that-be. The complete command structure of both IV Corps and 4 Division was being changed on the eve of battle. Maj. Gen. Harbaksh Singh replaced Kaul as G.O.C. IV Corps on promotion. Everyone would now be new to the ground, new to the situation."³⁹ "This crass mismanagement (Change of Commanders and Staff) must surely be without parallel in modern military history—in medieval military history, for that matter!"⁴⁰ As Sen was wise enough to swim with the tide, no harm came to him. He was not removed. Were the others really so inefficient that they had to be removed?

On 25th October, All India Radio announced that Kaul had got well and would command IV Corps. In spite of such heavy reversal the trio had not mend its ways and was in full command of the situation. Kaul should not have been appointed corps commander in the beginning of October. At least after the war he should have been kept away. For the trio the war was over and there was nothing to worry. Kaul had to be given his due. His reputation had to be saved. As for so many of their other actions, the country paid dearly for this act of the trio. It was also a shrewd way of suggesting that Kaul had done nothing wrong to replace him. The soldiers were horrified on hearing the news of his comeback. "I could almost feel the air of gloom that had descended on the H.Q.: there was distinct resentment at seeing Biji back in command."⁴¹ On 28 October, Kaul arrived in Tezpur. A bloody war awaited him.

The Chinese Attack-2

While the trio was behaving in a most irresponsible manner, the Chinese were preparing for the second phase of attack. If India was not interested in coming to a settlement then their strategy was to go in for a second strike. Nehru was not yet over with his rhetorics. The importance the Chinese gave to roads can be gauged from the fact that they immediately took up road-construction in

the captured area. "The Chinese constructed the Road Shao-Bumla-Towang and improved the road Towang-Jang in less than three weeks."⁴² The construction of road gave them mobility.

On 15 November Chinese attacked Walong which fell in two days. On 18 November, Chinese struck Sela. On 19th November, Se La and Bomdi La fell. Within a month of the first attack, the Chinese had attacked again. The Chinese wanted to settle the matter once for all. The earlier officers who knew the terrain had been removed from the scene. The new commanders were not acquainted with the area. On top of that Kaul failed to provide leadership. Even at the time of the war Kaul was busy with his gimmicks. Brigade Commander Rawley (Who retired as a Lt. General) was leading 11 Brigade at Walong. Kaul had a strange query for him. "He asked me about the operations and the likelihood of any local victories....I told him in front of my staff that he could not. I am told he did."⁴³ Kaul briefed Nehru about some imaginary victory.

On 20th November the Chinese declared a ceasefire and a unilateral withdrawal. They did not need Nehru's acceptance of it. This was the final result of the folly of the trio. A soldier put it this way. "They came into our house, slapped us and have gone back."⁴⁴

That was bound to happen sooner or later. For twelve years Nehru had acted in a most irresponsible manner. He was time and again warned of the consequences of his deeds. But he always succeeded in manipulating the situation to his advantage. He created a situation that did irreparable damage to the interest of the country. He was temperamentally unfit to prepare the country to face the Chinese.

He had been warned long- long back. On the 6th of Dec. 1950, Prof. Ranga had said referring to the Prime Minister of England, "A few months thereafter there was war. It was not his fault that war came. But it was his fault not to have prepared his country to face the situation that had overcome at Dunkirk and other places."⁴⁵ On that very day Mr. Masani had said, "The issue stated by the Prime Minister was peace or war. May I suggest that there is also the other issue of peace or appeasement leading to war?"⁴⁶ All that came true. Mr. Masani was in Parliament in 1962,

when the war took place. He did not forget to remind the Prime Minister of the debate that took place in the House in 1950 where the PM had ridiculed him!

The second Chinese attack was too much for Kaul. "On 20 November 1962, two Assam Ministers, Fakhruddin Ahmed and Bhagwati, who were at Tezpur that day, met the Corps Commander to find out what the position was....He apprehended that even before the Chinese army from Kameng reached Tezpur, the Chinese would make a large scale drop of paratroopers at Tezpur and Missamari airfields and capture them and then they would be able to land plane-loads of troops and stores at their will. The Indian army had no defence against this.....This talk dazed the two ministers.....Then followed the great civilian exodus from Tezpur. The treasury was emptied, notes were burnt or sent across to Nowgong; coins dumped in tanks; hospitals and jails cleared of the inmates; That night when the commissioner and the D.I.G. went to see the Corps Commander....He gave them a frightful forecast of what was going to happen.

He said that the Chinese were rolling down the hills at tremendous speed and would be on the outskirts of Tezpur before day-break. There was nothing to prevent the inexorable march of this tremendous fighting force and he also apprehended that early next morning would see the sky darkening with hundreds of Chinese paratroopers dropping from the sky....Hence, followed the most inglorious chapter of India's military withdrawal from North Assam in panic."⁴⁷ Earlier, in Parliament Nehru had claimed Kaul to be one of the best generals in the army.

Nehru had claimed himself to be a world-class leader who was heard the world over. But India never had substantial support from the world community. Even at the time of the war with China, India did not have many countries to count as friends. Irritated by the attitude of Nepal, he wrote a two- page letter to the king. "In the king's terse and short reply there was no mention of Chinese aggression."⁴⁸ The irony was that the countries that were the target of his regular criticism came to India's rescue at the critical hour. It was the smaller countries that were left to play a part in settling the dispute between the two neighbours. As China was not ready to forgo the gains of war, any settlement became impossible.

When it was all Over

After the crushing defeat Menon was removed from the cabinet in disgrace and made lame excuses for his actions. On 9th Dec. he said, "More powerful countries than our selves, more organized countries, countries more prepared for war than ours, have been defeated in sudden undeclared wars or suffered initial reverses in massive surprise attacks."⁴⁹ Like his mentor he now knew the need of purchasing arms from any available source. "We will go anywhere and to any part of the world where we can get equipment in order to bridge the gap between not having them or enough of them."⁵⁰ Earlier "Menon rejected the idea of purchasing a modern American rifle, and ignored offers of testing the American C-130 turbo-prop transport aircraft which, ironically, came to our rescue in November 1962"⁵¹

He did not forget eulogizing his mentor. "We have the inestimable advantage of a unique personality, one of the greatest men in the world whose wisdom has saved us so long from being dragged into a vortex of a world warand there is no person whose political or other wisdom is surpassed even by the collective wisdom of all of us. This is no hero worship."⁵² Both found one another the best in the world.

After the war Kaul wrote a book. Unfortunately, he had nothing to show as a bold soldier. He claimed that he knew of the shortages of the army and had made it clear to Nehru. In the book he wrote that he followed the plan of war as prepared by the IV Div. before he took over. As Corps Commander who had been to Namka Chu, he should have decided whether a confrontation with the Chinese was feasible or not. Prasad had told him that the plan was not practical and was prepared under duress on the orders from Sen. He wrote that he had convinced Nehru in Delhi not to attack Thagla. Two days later on 13th October when Kaul was at Tezpur he came to know of Nehru's orders to throw away the Chinese from Thagla. Kaul wrote, "It is a 64 Dollar question why Nehru made this contradictory statement on the 13th."⁵³ He wrote that Menon interfered with his decision to withdraw from the bed of Namka Chu river.

At the time of retirement Kaul went to see Gen. Chaudhari. "Chaudhuri wanted to ask one question. He said he knew the army was asked to fight against the Chinese in 1962 without sufficient resources, but why did Thapar or I not 'thump the table' to say no to government in such a situation?" Kaul wrote he gave a suitable reply. But he did not tell what it was.

After the war was over, Nehru was busy procuring arms and armament for the army. "We had long discussions with them (representatives of U.K. and U.S.A.) about the Chinese invasion of India and our need for various kinds of equipment to meet this attack on our country. I am glad to say that these discussions were fruitful and we hope to get much of the equipment required from the U.S. and U.K. as well as some other friendly countries. I am grateful to these countries for the help they are giving us in this crisis, which we have to face."⁵⁴ A thousand years ago Bhartri Hari had advised not to dig a well for water when the house was already on fire.

On 14th April 1963, Nehru wrote to the chief ministers, "I have often said, whatever the developments might be in regard to our conflict with China in the near future, our programme for strengthening our defences must continue. That is the only sure guarantee of our preventing Chinese aggression and of combating it whenever necessity arises."⁵⁵ It seems he was learning fast.

The policy of Panchsheel, which was forced on China by Nehru in 1954, was discarded scornfully by China. "On 15th Nov. 1962, The People's Daily editorially condemned the policy of peaceful co-existence as a big 'humbug' and declared that revolution alone was 'the locomotive of history.'" Nehru responded by saying, "Leaders of the two blocks, do not want a war and would welcome some peaceful arrangement....But in this desire for peace and co-existence there is one major exception, and that is China. China has repudiated the doctrine of peaceful co-existence."⁵⁶

The President of India S. Radhakrishnan called for Prasad. "Major General Har Narain Singh, Military Secretary to the President of India told me that the President wanted to see

me.....The President said, 'The Chief Minister of Assam, Mr. Chaliha, had been to see me. He told me that your troops had no ammunition, no warm clothing, no boots, limited rations and that you were forced into a death trap. I had earlier send for Krishna Menon, but he had told me that the troops had adequate weapons, equipment, clothing and rations and that it was the Army who had decided to move into Namka Chu Valley of its own accord.....What does Nehru mean by saying 'I have ordered the Army to throw the Chinese out?'"⁵⁷ What answer Nehru and his team could give for the grave mistakes they had committed? Indian Express commented on 18thOctober 1992, "The major lesson of the war with China seems to be that it was the leaders who failed the men- in-uniform, and the country in 1962."⁵⁸

Nehru kept supporting Menon after the war. But when he saw the mood of the executive of the Congress parliamentary Party, which was even ready to do without him but would not allow Menon to remain in power, he decided to remove the latter. He wanted to make Kaul the army chief. But the president put his foot down.

Kaul quotes Chanakya in his book, "A king who cannot anticipate his enemy's moves and complains that he had been stabbed in the back, should be dethroned." Nehru survived the disaster of war with China. He succeeded in convincing the nation that China had stabbed India in the back. That was a big lie. As he never fully kept the public informed about the happenings on the border and projected China as India's friend; it looked as if a friend had attacked the country. The secrecy Nehru had maintained regarding happenings on the border proved helpful to him. An informed nation would never have accepted such loose talk.

For full twelve years Nehru was warned against his wrong policies, he was challenged for his wrong doings, he went on claiming that his actions were the best thing that anybody could have done, he was again and again proved wrong in the matter of his policies regarding China and Tibet and he continuously claimed to be able to face any challenge on the border. All his weakness became apparent with India's defeat in war with China.

He survived on rhetorics. It is amazing how he managed not to make roads in the border areas for ten long years. Why did he

continue as Prime Minister if he was not capable of fulfilling his duties? How his conscience did not prick him? How could he bear that China went on encroaching upon Indian borders for years on end? And he had the cheek to believe throughout those years that he was destined to police the whole world! He had the audacity to scornfully insult those who were speaking the truth about happenings on the border. He was too tall a figure for the congressmen to remove. He was the main vote catcher for the party. They saw his lapses but had no courage to stand against him.

Had the gamble paid off well by China not giving any trouble after it absorbed Tibet; he would have claimed to be a leader who stood firm when all others were critical of his policies. But such a gamble should never be allowed. This is the lesson to be learnt. But after the war he had lost his halo. It was no more possible for him to sermonize to the whole world or to act as the torch bearer of world-peace. Two lingering wounds which are the result of his misdeeds are the boundary disputes and the Tibetan issue.

Tibet

India had relations with Tibet independent of China. For a thousand years Indians had been welcome to Tibet. With the advent of the Chinese there, Indian entry into Tibet slowly came to an end. "The trade agreement lapsed on 3 June 1962; India withdrew its trade agents from Yatung and Gyantse in Tibet; China withdrew its personnel from Kalimpong and Calcutta. The consul general at Lhasa was maintained for another six months until India decided to inform the closure of consular missions in both countries from 15 December."⁵⁹

Nehru's policies were always resented in India but he could not be checked. Sri Prakash wrote to Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the first President of independent India on 15.11.1962, "Our recognition of Tibet as part of China was a blunder. We have committed mistake

after mistake. It is dangerous to leave on the discretion of one man however great and able. We are suffering in consequence.”

Dr. Rajendra Prasad replied, “I agree with you that in the matter of Tibet, we acted not only un-chivalrously but even against our own interest in not maintaining the position of a buffer state for it and thus exposing a frontier of about 2,500 miles to the Chinese except for a small strip belonging to Nepal. I have very strong feelings about it. I feel that the blood of Tibet is on our head and we must do Prayashchit (penance) which is already being forced on us.”

“Let us hope that we shall be successful. But the Prime Minister does not like the name of Tibet to be mentioned even now and regards any mention of its liberation as ‘Manifest Nonsense’. No one suggests that we should march armies into Tibet. But is there anything wrong in wishing well of Tibet and treating it as a Sovereign Country under the suzerainty of China which the British used to do?”

“I may tell you that I raised this question at that time. But I was told that we were doing just what the British had done and in this we accepted something worse for Tibet than had been accepted by the British and I was silenced. But now when the Chinese have treated the Agreement with us as a mere scrap of paper, is there anything wrong in our going back to the position which existed before it was signed?”⁶⁰ Dr. Rajendra Prasad was President of India from 26th January 1950, up to 13th May 1962.

Nehru had no courage to amend his misdeeds. The human rights issue in Tibet came to the U.N. in 1956, 1961 and 1965. On the first two occasions India did not vote. On the third occasion India voted in favour of restoration of human rights in Tibet. At that time Lall Bahadur Shastri was the Prime Minister of India. Nehru was at his best when only rhetorics would suffice. “India has severed diplomatic relations with South Africa and Portugal and has refused to recognize Rhodesia for suppression of human rights. But even the worst form of apartheid enforced in South Africa pales into insignificance when compared to the atrocities which the Chinese have committed and are continuing to commit in Tibet.”⁶¹ Unfortunately Lal Bahadur Shastri did not live long to help the cause of Tibet.

India has a special responsibility and moral binding on its head. "History might find it hard to exonerate India of the charge that consciously or unconsciously she aided and abetted Peking in obliterating and absorbing Tibet."⁶² In 1950-51 China forcibly occupied Tibet. Nehru was totally incapable of stopping it. As a face saving device he claimed that China had suzerainty over Tibet. Even today there is good reason to recognize the Tibetan Government in Exile and repudiate the earlier acceptance of Tibet as part of China. "The status of Tibet is the first line of defence, the second for India to break the silence and bring that status before an international forum."⁶³

What happened in Tibet and what is happening even now is a big tragedy. Large- scale import of Chinese from the main land China is a continuous process. From this the very existence of Tibetan culture as a distinct identity is in danger of being lost. "When people die the next generation replaces them, but when a whole culture is destroyed it can never be replaced."⁶⁴

The voice of protest inside Tibet by the Tibetans has been silenced. In 1959 and thereafter all those who were against the Chinese rule were rounded up and ended in jails. They were systematically put to hard labour and starvation. They were given the barest minimum food to survive. They were forced to work even when unwell. They had no woolen clothes in winter. They saw inmates dying by their side. They had no flesh on their bodies; only bones and skin. The survivors have acknowledged that steep hunger had forced them to try to eat the dead bodies by their side. But they had no strength left to cut the skin with their teeth. Every day dead bodies were dumped in piles. Thousands died in this manner. A few who survived were allowed to go to their native places. There they told harrowing tales of what happened to them in jails and how most of the inmates had died. Only a few were left alive to tell the tale. And nobody could protect them from the Chinese atrocities. The outside world either did not know or did not care to know. This was good for the Chinese. The Tibetan won't dare to protest any more. For the Tibetans the whole of Tibet has become a prison. But the spirit to be free is alive.

Within the prison
this body is yours.
But within the body
my belief is only mine.⁶⁵

His Holiness the Dalai Lama

On his part, Dalai Lama continues his efforts to make the world more aware of the issue of Tibet. More and more Europeans and Americans are getting interested. From Hollywood Richard Gere, Harrison Ford, Steven Seagal and Uma Thurman are known supporters of Tibet. The Chinese keep track of him. They don't leave him alone. "At the same time, in Switzerland, France, Italy and perhaps some other countries, when the Dalai Lama is permitted to accept an invitation from a sympathetic group, there is always somebody assigned to remind him bluntly that his visit is private."⁶⁶ But Dalai Lama goes on.

He is trying his best to find an amicable solution for the ticklish issue of Tibet. He has agreed to accepting autonomy for Tibet. There are Tibetans who are not hopeful of such efforts. But he is trying to take them into confidence. Dalai Lama has also proposed to turn Tibet into a peace zone. That should be welcome in India. He also says that India has a prominent role to play in the settlement of the Tibetan issue. Recently he gave an audience to a group sympathetic to the cause of Tibet; 'Friends of Tibet'. He said that at present when the Indian Government is trying to improve relations with China, India should see to it the issue of Tibet is also taken up. That is very important from any point of view. The India China conflict has developed by neglecting the case of Tibet. It is part of the solution and not a stumbling block in bringing the countries of the region together.

Dalai Lama stands by the principle of non-violence of Gandhi. Gandhi fought the British face to face. He was convinced that the British had no good reason to be in India. He would resist wrong doing. At the same time he had as much love for the British as he

had for anybody else. Satyagraha implied that true love did not allow him to harm the British in any way whatsoever. So with deep sense of love, humbly and firmly he demanded justice from them. It was his honest and deep commitment to love that changed the hearts of the British. It goes to the credit of the British that they responded positively.

Can Dalai Lama expect the same of the Chinese? Can he stop them from their misdeeds while remaining outside of Tibet? Has his approach stopped the Chinese from their path of suppressing the Tibetans? Satyagraha will have to take place in Tibet proper to be effective. That calls for the degree of love which Gandhi had for humanity. The way Gandhi, a Hindu, could go to Bangla Desh to save Hindus from the Muslims in 1947 has no parallel in world history. It goes to the credit of Muslims of Bangla Desh that they proved beyond doubt that they could reciprocate love with love in the worst circumstances. Is China ready for the test?

There are Tibetans who are convinced that only armed revolt can force the Chinese to give Tibetans their due. They also see the possibility of taking to the path of terrorism. The best path for the Tibetans will be to make India take greater interest in the issue of Tibet. India should recognize the Tibetan Government in Exile. The Western world should be taken into confidence. Together all should force China to come to some settlement. The need of the hour is for the whole world to take notice of the injustice being done and the breach of human rights that is taking place in Tibet. The tragedy of Tibet is a blot on humanity. It calls for all right thinking people of the world to stand by Tibet and oppose the wrong doings of China and make the situation conducive for all Tibetans to live in their own country in their own way as they always did for ages before the advent of the Chinese on the scene.

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The book

The book deals with the policy of India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in respect of China and Tibet. It also deals with the Indo-Chinese border problem, which finally led to the 1962 war between these two countries.

From the very beginning of 1950 Tibet was put into a very difficult situation because of India's questionable approach towards the status of Tibet. Tibet was a free country up to then and India should have recognized it as such. India at that crucial stage resurrected from the graveyard the Chinese suzerainty over Tibet. But then India was not capable of helping Tibet even to maintain that suzerainty. Then for India and China this suzerainty turned into sovereignty. That is how the Chinese had wished it to be. Throughout it was Tibet that was made to suffer on account of this. Two big brothers were deciding the fate of a helpless Tibet.

On entering Tibet, the Chinese immediately started working on bringing it under firm control. They did not have respect for the Seventeen Point Agreement they had entered into with Tibet in 1951. In 1955-56 they started reforms in eastern Tibet. That invited resistance from the people there. In the beginning the Chinese were given a bloody nose. But because of their limitations finally the Tibetans lost. Then the persecutions started. The Tibetans were made to suffer untold miseries and cruelty; worse than what suppressed people have been made to suffer anywhere in the world.

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India had lost the opportunity of securing its northern border and keeping China away from the borders. This has created permanent problems for India. The possibility of this happening was clear to so many people from the very beginning. They had raised this issue with Nehru. But he did not deem it fit to listen to them. Nehru must have hoped to tame a wild China by his gestures of goodwill help cooperation. But that did not have effect on the Chinese. It did not deceive India. Nehru chose to be deceived.

They soon made their presence felt on the Indian border. India had not bothered to settle the issue with the Chinese when it had the opportunity to do so. As a result the Chinese went on encroaching upon Indian territory. Nehru did not inform the country of the nefarious activities of the Chinese. He did not prepare the country to face the Chinese in war if it came to that. But at the same time he went on assuring the country that China was a friend and that India was well prepared to face the Chinese challenge. Taken together it was a recipe for disaster. When war with China took place India did not have anything and anybody to fall back upon.

The Author

The author is a businessman. He was born in Kalimpong, a hotbed of political activity in the fifties. At that time he often saw the Tibetan merchants there. His family had business in Tibet proper. It had an establishment in Yatung in Tibet; a trade mart agreed upon between the British and the Tibetans in 1905. A 1911...

The road not taken

Jawaharlal Nehru was famous for his indecision and vacillation. His ambivalence and inability to face ominous realities for India were most evident in his encounter with the Chinese-cum-Tibetan question. The book deals with the circumstances that finally led to the war of 1962 and the defeat that India suffered.

The seeds of Indo-Chinese discord were sown as early as 1914 by the Mc Mahon line which came to determine the border between India and China, but was repudiated by the latter. Meanwhile China kept on claiming that Tibet was a part of it and warned that the People's Liberation Army was ready to liberate Tibet.

Ajay B. Agrawal points up the vague and weak-kneed border policy of Nehru that emboldened the Chinese to make inroads into Indian territory. In fact, Nehru was absolutely incapable of taking on the Chinese challenge at the border. The Chinese had started encroachments in 1954, but Nehru informed the Lok Sabha for the first time only in 1959. It was decided in 1950 to build roads in the border areas, but that did not happen. All the while, before and after the Chinese debacle, Nehru lamented that the border was not approachable due to lack of roads. Meanwhile China was building roads in border areas with an attack in mind.

The author cites more instances of Nehru's reckless and often irresponsible behaviour. Against Chinese aggression "he took the course of least resistance". He accepted the sovereignty of China over Tibet without fuss and was "making efforts to assure the world of China's peaceful intentions." He deliberately did not

**INDIA TIBET & CHINA:
THE ROLE NEHRU PLAYED**
By Ajay B. Agrawal,
N.A. Books International, Rs 295

allow Tibet to take its case to the world community. He forced the Tibetan delegation to go to China and became a party to the signing of the agreement between China and Tibet. He stood in the way of outside help for Tibet against the Chinese attack.

In the face of mounting evidence to the contrary, Nehru clung to the delusion that the Chinese would not attack India. At the same time Nehru went on assuring that the country was well prepared to face the Chinese. But the military unpreparedness was woeful, Indian soldiers were too ill-equipped to fight the enemy.

The height of folly was reached a month before the 1962 war with China. Nehru told Parliament that he had asked the army to evict the Chinese from Thagla when no such thing was done to that effect.

According to Agrawal, even the worst form of apartheid practised in South Africa cannot match the Chinese atrocities in Tibet. He suggests that "India should recognize the Tibetan Government in exile. The western world should be taken into confidence. Together all should force China to come to some settlement... The tragedy of Tibet calls for all right thinking people to stand by Tibet... and make the situation conducive for all Tibetans to live in their own country in their own way as they always did for ages."

Piyus Ganguly