2 MARCH 1963

~~TOP SECRET~~

COPY NO. 71

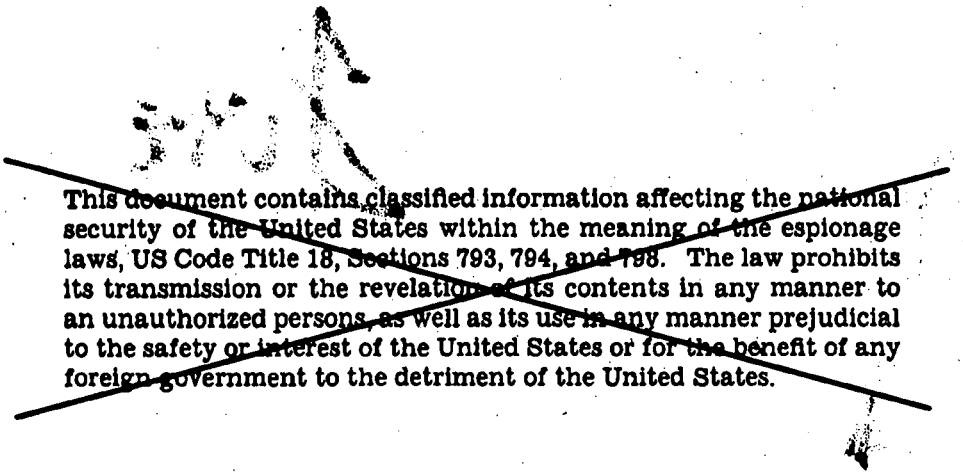
THE SINO-INDIAN BORDER DISPUTE

SECTION 1: 1950-59

DD/I STAFF STUDY

CIA/RSS

REFERENCE TITLE POLO XVI



This document contains classified information affecting the national security of the United States within the meaning of the espionage laws, US Code Title 18, Sections 793, 794, and 798. The law prohibits its transmission or the revelation of its contents in any manner to an unauthorized persons, as well as its use in any manner prejudicial to the safety or interest of the United States or for the benefit of any foreign government to the detriment of the United States.

It is to be seen only by US personnel especially indoctrinated and authorized to receive [redacted] information; its security must be maintained in accordance with [redacted] REGULATIONS.

No action is to be taken on any [redacted] which may be contained herein, regardless of the advantages to be gained, unless such action is first approved by the Director of Central Intelligence.

Off. Ser. No. 2 SC #04157/63

THE SINO-INDIAN BORDER DISPUTE

This is a working paper, the first of three on the Sino-Indian border dispute. This paper traces the political factors which led initially to the dispute and later to the attack of 20 October 1962.

In focusing on the motivation of the Chinese and Indian leaders, the paper offers only a cursory exposition of the historical case each side has developed for its border claims, and it does not attempt to judge the legality of the respective claims.

The Sino-Indian dispute, as we see it, did not arise as a function of the Sino-Soviet dispute and has not been conducted primarily with a view to its effect on that dispute. It has become, however, an issue in that dispute, and this paper touches on that aspect at various points.

The dispute will be discussed in a rough chronological scheme in three sections. This Section I covers the period 1950 to fall 1959; Section II will deal with the period from late 1959 through 1961; and Section III will cover 1962. Developments in 1963 will be referred to where they are relevant.

The DDI/RS would welcome comment, addressed either to the Chief or to Arthur Cohen [redacted]

SECTION I. (1950-1959)

Summary

Developments between late 1950 and late 1959 were marked by Chinese military superiority which, combined with cunning diplomatic deceit, contributed for nine years to New Delhi's reluctance to change its policy from friendship to open hostility toward the Peiping regime. It emerges that above all others Nehru himself--with his view that the Chinese Communist leaders were amenable to gentlemanly persuasion--refused to change this policy until long after Peiping's basic hostility to him and his government was apparent. When finally he did re-think his China policy, Nehru continued to see a border war as a futile and reckless course for India. His answer to Peiping was to call for a strengthening of the Indian economy to provide a national power base capable of effectively resisting an eventual Chinese military attack. In the context of the immediate situation on the border, where Chinese troops had occupied the Aksai Plain in Ladakh, this was not an answer at all but rather an implicit affirmation that India did not have the military capability to dislodge the Chinese.

The border dispute itself in this period centered largely on Chinese occupation of the Aksai Plain which, combined with minor armed clashes added the important dimension of an affronted national prestige on both sides. Behind the interminable exchange of letters and notes carrying territorial claims and counterclaims lies the view of the Indian leaders that Peiping surreptitiously had deprived India of a large corner of Ladakh and ever since has been trying to compel New Delhi to acquiesce in this encroachment. Not to acquiesce has become primarily a matter of national prestige, as the Aksai Plain is not really of strategic value--or was not held publicly to be of strategic value--to India. For a while in fall 1959 Nehru seemed to be preparing the Indian public for cession of the Aksai Plain to the Chinese in exchange for Indian ownership of the NEFA, but this was opposed by some leaders in the Congress Party.

In the Chinese view, the area is strategically important primarily because it provides a land link between Sinkiang and Tibet. To agree to give it back would be viewed as a major Chinese defeat, and in this way considerations of national prestige also enter into the calculations of the Chinese leaders. In occupying the area, they probably believed that just as Indian forces moved up into the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) in the early 1950s and established a military presence in the Chinese-claimed eastern sector, so too they could with equal justification move gradually into the Aksai Plain in the mid-1950s to establish a military presence in the West.

It was basic Chinese policy early in Peiping's relations with New Delhi not to claim territory in writing or orally, but only on the basis of maps. Thus the Chinese claim to NEFA appeared only as a line on Chinese maps dipping at points about 100 miles south of the McMahon line. Chou En-lai, in talks with Nehru in 1954 and 1956, treated the Chinese maps not as representing Peiping's "claim" but, on the contrary, as old maps handed down from the previous mainland regime which had "not yet" been corrected. This provided the Chinese premier with a means for concealing Peiping's long-range intention of surfacing Chinese claims at some time in the future (when there would be no longer any necessity to be deceptive about them) while avoiding a dispute with the Indian Prime Minister in the present.

As Peiping and New Delhi were generally cordial to each other in these early years, the Chinese had not wanted to change their policy toward Nehru and thereby lose the benefit of an important champion of Peiping's cause in international affairs.* They had not wanted to alert the Indian leaders to their move on the road until such time as the Indians could do nothing about it. They apparently believed that like China's other borders, the Sino-Indian border need not be delimited and that the matter could remain in limbo. Whether they foresaw a time when they could persuade Nehru or a successor to

*The Korean war and the need for maintaining good relations with governments that had recognized the Peiping regime made Mao's policy toward New Delhi less belligerent than that of the Indian Communists from 1950 to 1958.

accept China's claims is conjectural, but they seem to have decided at an early date that their short-term policy should be one of not alerting Nehru to the wide gap between Chinese and Indian claims. In practice, this meant they would have to lie about Chinese maps, and they did.

The course of the dispute points up a curious suspicion which developed in the Chinese leaders' thinking about Nehru's intentions and the forces at work on him. Their early actions reflected an awareness that Nehru was more conciliatory toward them than the Opposition, the press, and even some members of his cabinet. By late April 1959, however, they turned on Nehru himself, and suspected him of having abetted some of the anti-Chinese criticism regarding the Tibetan revolt.

It emerges from the developed Chinese Communist view that leaders are leaders--i.e. they can control and direct the opinions of the masses and paltry political opponents. More importantly, Nehru is Nehru--i.e. his prestige is so great in India that the masses in crisis situations merely follow his lead. That the masses and the political opposition could push a great political leader, Nehru, into a harder China policy against his will apparently was a concept which the Chinese had considered but in late April 1959 rejected as not being a complete political appraisal. A great political leader with Nehru's enormous prestige could prevent vigorous anti-China outbursts if he so desired. And if he could not prevent sharp outbursts, he could certainly control them once they took place. Similarly, the press was not really an independent institution, but rather a big "propaganda machine" at Nehru's disposal (People's Daily, 6 May 1959), used by him for reasons of state.

Finally, the Chinese recognized the independence from the Congress Party and Nehru of Opposition parties in Parliament, but in late April 1959 they underestimated the influence of the Opposition, through public opinion, in driving Nehru toward a "harder" China policy. They apparently could not believe that the opposition was capable of creating a perceptible shift in Nehru's policy and actions, and were therefore reluctant to accept the fact that their charges of Indian "expansionism" as well as the Tibetan revolt and, later, the border clashes were providing the Parlimentary Opposition and the press with the very weapons to turn Nehru away from a conciliatory course. Their fear was that Nehru and his Congress Party advisers would use the public uproars against them, but they believed that he could not become captive of the outbursts.

Their basic view seems to have been: if Nehru has become less conciliatory and moved to the "right," the real political cause is a voluntary shift by Nehru himself (or by his own top advisers) which has been encouraged by the U.S. Even if the alternate possibility seriously suggested itself--e.g. that Chinese political and military actions caused the change in Nehru's thinking about Peiping's intentions--it seems to have been rejected. For it is logically neater, less complex, indeed more inwardly self-assuring to reject their actions as the cause and see Nehru as the arch enemy because of his own change in attitude toward China.

As for considering India as a major military threat, the Chinese leaders seem to have acted throughout the period as though it were not, and as though they could handle it when it became one. They may have had temporary misgivings, feeling at times that he might swing India unequivocally toward the West and into the U.S. "camp", but Nehru's forceful reaffirmations of his policy of non-alignment may have dispelled these fears. Nevertheless, his growing distrust of the Chinese leaders led them in turn to view him as a "two-faced" neutral --one who professes neutralism generally but is anti-Chinese on key issues, the definition of a real neutral being one who opposes no Chinese policies, like Sihanouk. Nehru, therefore, was no longer China's "friend." He was, of course, still better than the "rightist" leaders in India, and the Chinese hoped that by calling for negotiations on the border dispute they could pull him back from the swing to the right.

By fall 1959, the Chinese leaders had decided to switch from a policy of no negotiations on an overall border settlement, coasting along on the basis of the existing status quo, to one of preliminary discussions with a view to an eventual overall settlement. The respective Chinese and Indian positions regarding such a prospective settlement and the preliminary discussions which took place in 1960 will be discussed in Section II of this paper.

Pre-Dispute Atmosphere: 1950-1959

From the start, the Chinese leaders seem to have recognized that India was neither by temperament nor capability a military threat to their border. The first clear indication that they need not fear Indian military action on the border came in fall 1950. PLA troops entered eastern Tibet and began fighting Tibetans at Changtu on 7 October 1950. New Delhi drew Peiping's attention to the harmful effects of this "deplorable" move, viz. postponement of admission to the UN and unrest on India's borders--21 October. Peiping blasted back that New Delhi was affected by foreign influences "hostile to China and Tibet"--30 October. New Delhi promptly subsided, expressing "surprise" at the Chinese allegation and stating that India "only wished for a peaceful settlement" of the Tibet problem --1 November.

The Chinese promised New Delhi--according to a member of the Indian UN delegation--that their occupation of Tibet would be "peaceful," that their forces under Chang Kuo-hua and Tan Kuan-san would remain at Changtu and not march on Lhasa, and that therefore India should not feel concern over the fate of Tibet. The Indian UN delegation, acting on the basis of Peiping's no-use-of-force assurance, blocked consideration of a censure of the Chinese in the UN, and Nehru in December 1950 publicly supported the Chinese position on the grounds that Tibet should be handled only by the parties concerned--Peiping and Lhasa. But the Chinese went back on their promise and, following the May 1951 agreement with Tibetan representatives, directed PLA forces at Changtu to "liberate the whole of Tibet," which they did, entering Lhasa on 26 October 1951. Apparently

at no time during these PLA operations in Tibet did the Chinese leaders fear that Indian troops would be used to open a "second front" against them because Nehru had not been antagonized--indeed relations were friendly--and because the Indian military establishment was weak.*

The Chinese leaders' attitude toward the disparity between Chinese and Indian maps had been to avoid making the matter a dispute. This meant that Nehru was not to be irritated and that Indian public was to be cut out of information pertaining to border matters. The Chinese (and Nehru) saw the use of diplomatic channels as the safest way to exclude the Indian public, press, and Parliament, and they used these channels effectively for several years.

The Chinese diplomatic effort was a five-year masterpiece of guile, executed--and probably planned in large part--by Chou En-lai. Chou played on Nehru's Asian, anti-imperialist mental attitude, his proclivity to temporize, and his sincere desire for an amicable Sino-Indian relationship. Chou's strategy was to avoid making explicit, in conversations and communications with Nehru, any Chinese border claims, while avoiding any retraction of those claims which would require changing Chinese maps. Chou took the line with Nehru in Peiping in October 1954 that Communist China "had as yet had no time to revise" the Kuomintang maps, leaving the implication but not the explicit

*The movement of some Indian forces into the NEFA and the establishment of a few scattered checkposts on the McMahon line after 1951 was tolerated by the Chinese apparently because they hoped to maintain a smooth Sino-Indian relationship and because the number of Indian personnel involved was militarily insignificant. Peiping's assertion (People's Daily, 27 October 1962) that this action was allowed to go unchallenged because "New China had no time to attend to the Sino-Indian border" and China's security "was seriously threatened" by the Korean hostilities is largely a post facto rationalization designed to magnify the military and aggressive nature of the Indian move in "forcibly pushing" the boundary up to the McMahon line. Chang Kuo-hua employs a different argument, claiming that "the Indian army took advantage of our peaceful liberation of Tibet" to occupy the NEFA; he does not mention Korean hostilities and places his emphasis on "this aggressive act of the Indian army." (People's Daily, 25 October 1962)

promise that they would be revised. In New Delhi in November-December 1956, Chou sought to create the impression with Nehru that Peiping would accept the McMahon line, but again his language was equivocal, and what he conceded with his left hand, he retrieved with his right. He is quoted by Nehru as having said that

> ...the Chinese Government is of the opinion that they /Peiping/ should give recognition to the McMahon line. They had, however, not consulted the Tibetan authorities about it yet. They proposed to do so. (Cited from Nehru's letter to Chou, 14 December 1958)

In accepting this explanation for conditional recognition of the McMahon line, Nehru in December 1956 appeared to have retained his unquestioning--or rather, unsuspicious--attitude

regarding Chou's discussion of the border.* He seems to have placed some faith--or at least accepted at face value--Chou's implied assurances that extensive claims on Chinese maps would be revised. Nehru is reported to have dismissed a letter he received in 1958 from former Burmese Premier Ba Swe warning him to be "cautious" in dealing with Chou on the Sino-Indian border issue. Nehru is said to have replied by declaring Chou to be "an honorable man," who could be trusted. The Indians later complained, in pathetic terms, of the Chinese

*Nehru did not explore the Sino-Indian border situation in detail with Chou until the latter referred to the Sino-Burma border problem. Despite his wish not to become involved with Sino-Burmese differences, Nehru had written to Chou on behalf of Premier Ba Swe in mid-September 1956, suggesting that both countries settle the dispute "peacefully" and according to the Five Principles. Chou is said to have acknowledged Nehru's letter in a general way and promised to discuss the question "later." It was after Chou brought the matter of the Sino-Burma borde. into the December 1956 discussions that he mentioned the McMahon line. Nehru agreed with Chou that the name "McMahon line" was not a good one to use: it was only a matter of facility of reference. Chou then reportedly stated that China accepted this line as the border with Burma and proposed to recognize this border with India as well. Thus Chou left Nehru with the implied assurance that there was really no dispute between Peiping and New Delhi over the line. As for Tibet, Chou reportedly stated he desired that it remain autonomous.

No Chou-Nehru communique was issued after their talks because of differences on other international problems.

their talks were devoted primarily to discussions of U.S. foreign policy and Soviet policy in Eastern Europe during the Hungarian revolt. Nehru differed with Chou on both issues, insisting that U.S. policy had changed (when Chou said it had not changed toward China) and that the revolt was a genuine expression of majority opinion in Hungary (when Chou said it was the counterrevolutionary activity of a minority).

practice of deceit:

> When discrepancies between Indian and Chinese maps were brought to the notice of the Chinese Government, they replied that their maps were based on old maps of the Kuomintang period and they did not assert any claims on the basis of these maps. Nor did they challenge the official Indian maps which were showing the traditional alignment. /emphasis supplied/ (Cited from Ministry of External Affairs Brochure, issued 12 January 1960)

The Chinese leaders apparently believed that if the impression of old maps to be revised were to be reinforced in Nehru's thinking, the question of an overall settlement of Indian and Chinese border claims would not arise: the border, according to this impression, would agree with the Indian version and the Chinese would respect the Indian maps.

Nehru was, therefore, not alert to the Chinese advances in Ladakh. He was not alert in particular to the construction--started in March 1956--through the Indian-claimed Aksai Plain of the Sinkiang-Tibet road. At first, the Chinese had been deceptively vague. Peiping's first public reports regarding the road were not made until March 1957--one year after construction had started and was well underway--and contained little information other than the names of the terminals in Sinkiang and Tibet and an intermediate location, Shahidulla Mazar (Saitula; 78 03 E - 36 25 N). New Delhi could have inferred from the Chinese reference to Shahidulla Mazar that the new road would follow the traditional caravan route across the Aksai Plain through Indian-claimed territory but apparently was not stimulated to inquire. When, on 2 September 1957, Peiping announced that the road would be completed in October and People's Daily on the same day published a sketch map showing that the road in fact followed an alignment across the northeast corner of Ladakh, the Indian embassy reported to New Delhi that the road "apparently passes through the Aksai Plain, which is Kashmir territory." New Delhi did not protest to Peiping because, Nehru claimed later, he was not certain:

> Our attention was drawn to a very small-scale map about two and one-quarter by three-quarters inches published in a

Chinese newspaper indicating a rough alignment of the road. It was not possible to find out from this small map whether this road crossed Indian territory, although it looked as if it did so. It was decided, therefore, to send reconnaissance parties the following summer to find the location of this road. (Nehru to Parliament, 31 August 1959)

Actually, it was not until April 1958 that Nehru decided to dispatch two military reconnaissance patrols to determine the alignment and check on Chinese military post locations in the Aksai Plain. Nehru's personal guidance to the patrols included the order to capture and bring back to Leh any "small" group of Chinese encountered and, if a "large" force were encountered, to inform the Chinese troops that they were in Indian territory and "ask them to leave." The Indian patrols started out in June; one was "detained" by the Chinese on the road in early September 1958. Peiping's 3 November 1958 note to New Delhi, which stated that the patrol members would be released, insisted that both patrols had "clearly intruded into Chinese territory." The Indians took this statement as a formal claim to the Aksai Plain, noting on 8 November that it is "now clear that the Chinese Government also claim this area as their territory." Thus by the time the full meaning of the Chinese gradual advance into the Aksai Plain had been borne home to him, Nehru was confronted by a military fait accompli: Chinese forces exercised actual control along the road.*

*The Chinese leaders have seized upon Indian ignorance of the road prior to 2 September 1957--the date of the Chinese "nearing completion" announcement--to support their case of prior presence--and, therefore, actual possession--in the Aksai Plain. Nehru conceded in Parliament (on 31 August 1959) that the raod had been built "without our knowledge" and that New Delhi had not complained to Peiping until 18 October 1958. The Indian failure to protest before October 1958 made Foreign Minister Chen Yi's deliberate extension by many months of the period of New Delhi's ignorance of the road seem plausible. Chen told a Swiss correspondent in Geneva (on 19 July 1962) that "up to 1959" the Indian government "knew nothing about it and never mentioned it." He tried to convey the impression that New Delhi became aware of the road only after the outbreak of the Tibetan revolt in March 1959, when India "interfered in the revolt. Premier Chou En-lai spoke (4 November 1962 letter to Nehru) of the road as involving "gigantic engineering work" in 1956 and 1957, implying that construction of such a scale could hardly have gone undetected by the Indians if indeed their forces had been anywhere in the Aksai Plain at the time.

Chinese claims in late 1958 regarding the Sinkiang-Tibet road (and the territory which it traversed) and the capture of the Indian patrol on the road did not lead immediately to general public awareness of the border dispute or the embitterment of the Chou-Nehru personal relationship. These claims did not force a breach in this relationship but rather contributed to a gradual cooling of attitudes already occurring Signs that Chinese and Indian relations had begun to cool appeared earlier in 1958, particularly when the Chinese in summer postponed indefinitely Nehru's proposed trip to Tibet and in fall waited three weeks before granting visas to him and his party to cross a small portion of Tibet--where they were subsequently snubbed by the Chinese--on their way to Bhutan. Nehru, however, still refrained from making public attacks on such Chinese actions--including minor border incursions*--which

*Minor border crossings and patrol encounters since at least 1954 had not created really serious anxiety in New Delhi, as no exchange of fire took place. The closest both sides came to an armed clash was the September 1956 incident at Shipki Pass when a 10-man Chinese patrol threw stones at an Indian patrol trying to advance and threatened to use grenades. It seems that patrols of both sides were under instructions not to use their weapons except in self-defense.

Nehru, however, was anxious to settle by common agreement with the Chinese the ownership of small points along the border at which Indian and Chinese patrols occasionally met. The Chinese were not at first receptive to his approaches because they apparently believed that Nehru would use joint discussions to raise the issue of Chinese map-claims in definitive terms. The Chinese procrastined since June 1956 on Indian requests for a joint investigation of the dispute over Bara Hoti (which the Chinese refer to as Wu-je). Nehru informed Parliament in a brief statement on 5 September 1957 that although Peiping had agreed to discuss ownership of Bara Hoti, the Chinese had not yet mentioned a firm date for a meeting. Nehru added, "We have again reminded them." The Chinese finally agreed to send a delegation to New Delhi and both sides agreed on 19 April 1958 not to send troops into the area. The Chinese in this way avoided any settlement on the matter of ownership--which Nehru had orginally sought--and again prevented Sino-Indian discussions on ownership of larger and more important areas claimed by both sides.

would stir up Indian opinion and damage his relationship with Chou. Despite the formal protest (18 October 1958) to Peiping regarding the capture of the Indian patrol on the road, Nehru was reliably reported at the time anxious to keep this and other recent border incidents from public knowledge.

The Dispute Acknowledged: January 1959

Questions in Parliament regarding the Chinese map claims forced Nehru to press Peiping for revisions. Nehru had "recognized the force" of Chou's October 1954 statement that Peiping had had no time to revise old Chinese maps, but the publication in a Chinese magazine (China Pictorial, No. 95, July 1958) of a map showing large areas of Indian-claimed territory still depicted as Chinese compelled him to request--in a Ministry of External Affairs note, 21 August 1958--that "necessary corrections in the Chinese maps should not be delayed further." (Nehru added, in a personal letter to Chou on 14 December 1958, that "questions were asked in our Parliament" about the map contained in the magazine article, implying that Chinese failure to revise the maps finally had become a public matter reflecting adversely on him personally.) The Chinese response of 3 November 1958 clearly indicated that no revisions would be made, but sought to soften the blow by proposing surveys of the border. That the Chinese hoped to procrastinate, to put Nehru off indefinitely if possible, and thereby to avoid making the issue of claims a Sino-Indian dispute is suggested by the language used in their 3 November note:

> The Chinese Government believes that with the elapse of time, and after consultations with the various neighboring countries and a survey of the border regions, a new way of drawing the boundary of China will be decided in accordance with the results of the consultations and the survey.

The statement that consultations and surveys were necessary was not a proposal for immediate Sino-Indian talks. Border negotiations with New Delhi were still something which Peiping hoped to avoid. Even when Nehru in December 1958 pressed Chou on the matter of Chinese maps, Chou did not raise Sino-Indian negotiations as an immediate necessity but rather called for a continuation of the status quo on the border.

Ever since his meeting with Nehru in October 1954, Chou seems to have taken the position that there really was no overall border dispute. He had never denied that--as Nehru put it in December 1958--there were only certain "very minor border problems" and "petty issues" which could be settled by meetings of officials on lower levels. However, when pressed by Nehru (letter of 14 December 1958) regarding maps in the July 1958 issue of a Peiping magazine, Chou admitted (letter of 23 January 1959) that developments "in the past few years...show that border disputes do exist between China and India."

Nehru had stated in his December 1958 letter that he was "puzzled" by the Chinese desire (expressed in Peiping's note of 3 November 1958) to conduct surveys to find a "new way of drawing the boundary of China," because "I had thought that there was no major boundary dispute between China and India." Nehru was telling Chou by implication that the Chinese premier was breaking a tacit--or gentlemen's--agreement regarding the border.

Nehru's letter to Chou was the first he had sent on the Sino-Indian border dispute and was intended to convey to Chou the seriousness with which New Delhi now viewed Peiping's map claims. Chou recognized that a critical juncture had been reached on the border issue and that Nehru seemed determined to force the issue. In his January 1959 letter of reply, Chou conceded that the border issue was not raised in his talks with Nehru in 1954, but gave as the reason for this the view that "conditions were not yet ripe for its settlement"--a hint that Chou in 1954 had been trying to avoid injecting a contentious issue into the young and cordial Sino-Indian friendship. He reminded Nehru that "questions" had been kept in "diplomatic channels," and implied that he preferred this practice to continue.

Chou then made a significant reversal of the entire Chinese position on the border issue. Chou (1) implied that the old maps were accurate at most points, (2) stated that there would be "difficulties" in changing them, and (3) alluded to the Chinese people's" objection to Indian maps claiming the western sector. By thus surfacing the real Chinese position regarding the border maps, Chou indicated he did not believe "questions in Parliament" had caused Nehru to raise the issue of the maps. Chou suspected Nehru of using a transparent and implausible justification for pressing him on the map issue: popular

pressure. Chou replied:

> Our people, too, have expressed surprise at the way the Sino-Indian boundary, particularly its western section, is drawn on maps published in India. They have asked our government to take up this matter with the Indian government. Yet we have not done so, but have explained to them the actual situation of the Sino-Indian boundary.

The implication was that the Chinese leaders believed that Nehru would have found no difficulty in "explaining" the border situation to the people and Parliament but chose not to, acting on his own and not really under pressure from Parliament.

This apparent misreading of the forces at work on Nehru was a feature of subsequent Chinese thinking. Combined with a developing appraisal of Nehru as basically anti-Chinese and thus not really neutral in foreign policy, this kind of thinking apparently convinced the Chinese that Nehru would remain anti-Chinese whether they surfaced the fact of an overall border dispute on claims or not. Moreover, since Nehru had pressed them strongly on the matter of maps, they had no alternative but to suggest that the Chinese maps were by and large accurate. Chou's January 1959 letter was therefore a reflection of Peiping's basic reappraisal of Nehru as a "friend" which had been developing for at least a year.

However, the Chinese leaders wanted to avoid border clashes. Chou appealed to Nehru to temporarily maintain the present state of the entire boundary until it was surveyed and "formally delimited"--i.e. indefinitely:

> Our government would like to propose to the Indian Government that, as a provisional measure, the two sides temporarily maintain the status quo, that is to say, each side keep for the time being the border areas at present under its jurisdiction and not go beyond them.

This position meant that the Chinese would continue to occupy the Aksai Plain. The Chinese leaders probably anticipated a

sharp reaction from Nehru and his advisers and perhaps even more active Indian patrolling into Chinese-claimed territory. Nehru's reply, expressing shock at the Chinese definitive position,* was delivered in a letter to Chou (22 March 1959) after the outbreak of the Tibetan revolt. His letter conveyed the impression of a troubled friend, enlarged on previous Indian documentary support for New Delhi's border claims, and ended with a hint that the border issue might adversely affect Sino-Indian relations.

The Tibetan Revolt: March 1959

The December 1958 - March 1959 exchange of letters between Chou and Nehru engendered strains which were deepened into bitterness by the Tibetan revolt, which broke out on 10 March 1959. The revolt made it even more difficult than before to keep all aspects of the border dispute in diplomatic channels, under wraps. Chinese military action against the rebels drew the attention of the Indian press, public, and Nehru's Parliament Opposition to developments along the border in a manner which made it virtually impossible for Nehru to employ the tactic of understatement in order to conceal, or minimize, the facts of the overall border dispute and the gradual cooling of Sino-Indian relations.

Shortly before the revolt began, Indian government officials had indicated in conversations with Western diplomats that the private New Delhi view of China definitely was changing. The Indian commercial counselor in Peiping told an American official in Hong Kong on 13 January 1959 that "India is taking a second look at Communist China," and expressed New Delhi's growing disenchantment with the Chinese. He stated that the Chinese had become extremely arrogant, occasionally did not even acknowledge notes from the Indian embassy to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and were careful not to put down on paper their verbal

*Nehru conceded that the frontier "has not been demarcated on the ground in all sectors but I am somewhat surprised to know that this frontier was not accepted at any time by the Government of China."

comments that the "old" Kuomintang maps did not really represent Peiping's position. He concluded, however, with the remark that New Delhi would find it very difficult to give public notice of its cooling attitude toward Peiping. Nehru continued to cling to the hope that Sino-Indian relations could be kept from further deteriorating and that Indian officials should avoid antagonizing the Chinese. In mid-February, Nehru personally scolded Indian demographer Chandrasekhar for articles he had written in January attacking the communes as places where "human beings are reduced to the level of inmates in a zoo" --articles which drew a formal protest from Peiping and which, Nehru said, proved detrimental to Sino-Indian relations. Nehru conceded to Chandrasekhar, however, that he did not doubt the accuracy of the articles, suggesting that he (Nehru) was as much disturbed by unpalatable truths regarding China as he was by the diplomatic consequences of publishing such truths.

It seems that when Nehru realized he must revise his thinking concerning Chinese Communist policy toward India and internal developments on the mainland, he was reluctant to engage in such a painful process. Partly for reasons of state and partly because of this reluctance--a reluctance to admit to himself a fact that was becoming clear to other Indian officials,* namely that the Chinese were exploiting his tolerant attitude--Nehru's actions appeared equivocal in handling Sino-Indian relations after the eruption of the Tibetan revolt.

On the one hand, he moved with care to support the Tibetan rebels in public only inferentially. The Dalai Lama fled Lhasa on 17 March and requested asylum in India through the Indian consul general in Lhasa. Nehru's immediate concern was with the possibility of serious clashes in the event Chinese troops pursued Tibetan rebels into Indian territory. He instructed frontier checkposts to deny admission to any rebels fleeing Tibet; later, rebels were admitted but were disarmed and told by Indian military personnel to "relax." Nehru gave secret assurances to resistance leaders in India that he would provide

*Indian officials in Peiping are reliably reported in late March 1959 to have expressed open distaste for and fear of the Chinese attitude toward the suppression of the rebels and laxness of the Sino-Indian border issue. They disagreed with Nehru's attitude of "saintliness, gentlemanliness, and too much reliance on ethics" toward the Chinese, hoping that the Chinese would eventually "appreciate" such an attitude shown for Peiping and its cause.

asylum for the Dalai Lama and his staff, but officially maintained a policy of noninterference in the Tibetan situation. His promise to the Dalai Lama's brother that he would take up the Tibetan issue with Peiping and urge that Tibet be granted full autonomy was more a gesture to the rebels than an indication of firm intention to really pressure the Chinese leaders.* Nehru also moved circumspectly in handling the Dalai Lama shortly after he entered India at Towang on 31 March, attempting (with some initial success) to isolate him from the press and restrict his political activity in order to avoid further provoking the Chinese leaders.

On the other hand, he treated the Chinese with a new coolness. Shortly after the start of the revolt, he refused to see the Chinese ambassador and Indian Ministry of External Affairs officials were directed to reject sharply the ambassador's complaints about the Indian consul general's activities in Lhasa.

*Nehru adhered to his policy of noninterference in his statement to Parliament on 23 March. The first Peiping comment on the Tibetan revolt, published in the form of a New China News Agency (NCNA) "news communique" on 28 March, "welcomed" Nehru's 23 March statement on nonintervention "in China's internal affiars." The Chinese leaders apparently were encouraged to believe that they could indirectly intimidate Nehru into declining to defend the rebels in word and deed. The communique went on to state that "Chinese government quarters...consider this statement to be friendly," but hinted that discussion of the Tibetan revolt in India's Parliament would be "impolite and improper." In his statement before Parliament on 30 March, Nehru continued to hew to noninterference, balancing his expression of "sympathy" for the rebels--in his view, the least offensive statement regarding them--with a reaffirmation of India's desire for friendly relations with Peiping. He rejected, of course, Peiping's arrogant allegation that discussion of Tibet in Parliament would be improper.

The Chinese continued to warn against interference (Peiping People's Daily, 31 March), having complained (28 March) that Kalimpong was a "command center of the rebellion." They did not as yet attack Nehru, however, hoping that he would act to restrain Indian commentary.

On balance, however, he still hoped to salvage at least a diplomatically correct relationship with the Chinese leaders, particularly with Chou En-lai.

By early April, many Asian neutrals were bewildered regarding the extent to which the Chinese leaders had destroyed the spirit of the Chou-Nehru five principles of peaceful coexistence--a spirit they, particularly Chou, had attempted to create and sustain since 1954. For the Chinese leaders, however, first priority was given to crushing the revolt while trying to prevent their drastic military actions from irreparably antagonizing Nehru. Crushing the rebels and conciliating Nehru, they seemed to believe, might prove to be compatible goals if it were made clear to Nehru that China would under no circumstances accept Indian interference and that it was therefore not in India's interest to go to war with China "over a handful of rebels."

Chou hammered at this point in his report to the National People's Congress on 18 April 1959. Chou and subsequent speakers at the congress stressed the futility of any Indian aid to the rebels, as they had "already met with ignominious defeat." That is, the revolt had been crushed (actually, scattered rebel forces continued to harass the PLA) and Nehru would do best to acquiesce in the fait accompli.

The Chinese leaders were speaking and acting from a position of strength: their military superiority (and will to fight) over the Indians was enormous. Thus just as in 1951 when the PLA occupied Tibet and left it with an anomolous autonomy and the Dalai Lama with a small armed force, so too in 1959 India lacked the military power (and will) to stop them. In this situation of military inferiority, India's voice carried no weight with the Chinese leaders. In their eyes, Nehru was reduced to letting Peiping know how Indians "feel" about PLA actions in Tibet--the moralizing of a bourgeois-leaning national leader who, for reasons of state, had been led to believe in 1956 that a solid guarantee of Tibet's autonomy was given

him, but who had not been made aware of the deceitful language.* While moving militarily against the rebels, the Chinese leaders attempted to undercut any representations Nehru might make to Peiping on behalf of theTibetans not by completely rejecting autonomy but rather by claiming that it still is in force in a special "administrative" way. A Chinese Communist foreign ministry official informed the Indian ambassador in Peiping in early April that the 1951 autonomy agreement between Chinese Communist and Tibetan authorities would continue to be respected, but only "as the basis for the administration of Tibet." To the Indians, however, this meant that Tibet would thereafter be not even a little bit more autonomous (as it had been until March 1959) than any of the other autonomous regions and chou's in Communist China. It was clear to Nehru that the Chinese had won the Tibet issue on the power level by May 1959, but he seemed to feel--and certainly wanted to believe--that India had come out ahead on the moral level. In any case, Nehru told the American ambassador in May that he was fully conscious of the insecurity of India's borders, as he knew the military power he was up against as far as the Chinese were concerned. He hinted at this publicly when he stated at a press conference on 14 May that whatever Indian jurists may say about the legal status of Tibet and Chinese suzerainty "the question is really decided by the strength of the nation."

Despite the exchange of insinuations between members of India's Parliament and speakers at China's National People's Congress in late April, both Nehru and Chou avoided statements which could be taken by either as a gross offense or unpardonable insult. Both premiers were keenly aware of the political importance of keeping their personal relationship intact. Chou on 18 April spoke approvingly of the references

*Nehru declared (in Parlaiment speech on 4 September 1959) that PLA actions in Tibet caused India to be "pained" and "upset." He went on to assert that when he talked with Chou Enlai in New Delhi in 1956, the Chinese premier, on his own initiative, told Nehru that Peiping wanted to respect Tibet's autonomy, but added that China would not tolerate rebellion or foreign interference. Regarding autonomy, Nehru conceded that in fact Chou did not give a guarantee to which he could be "held to account."

to noninterference and friendship in the statements of "Prime Minister Nehru of our great friendly neighbor India." Nehru's statements were made in a tone of sorrow not anger. Speaking for the weaker country, Nehru used "moral jujitsu" (as he put it privately at the time), drawing on gentle phrases expressed in almost biblical tones for eight sessions of Parliment between 17 March and 4 May. He tried to absolve India of responsibility for any action that could have offended Peiping. His statements implied--indeed, were intended to convey the impression to the Chinese leaders--that he realized India's security and friendship for China were two interrelated goals, outweighing by far New Delhi's sympathy for Tibet and the Dalai Lama.

He reaffirmed his policy of working for Peiping's admission to the UN and of non-alignment and declared that although there was a desire to settle India's troubles with Pakistan, he had no plans for a military alignment with any country come what may. He explicitly ruled out any sort of common defense agreement with Pakistan. Regarding charges of collusion between Indian officials and the Dalai Lama in India, he asserted that he was shocked "beyond measure...It would have been wrong on political, humanitarian, and other grounds not to give asylum to the Dalai Lama." For Nehru, who on the one hand was compelled by the presence on Indian soil of the Dalai to defend him and who on the other hand was reluctant to further strain Sino-Indian relations, asylum and sympathy constituted the practical limit of his support for the Dalai at Mussorie. He told the Tibetan leader to limit his activities in India to "religious affairs," and Indian officials were probably reflecting Nehru's real anxiety when they stated privately that the government would not be sorry to see the Dalai leave the country.

The Chinese Appraise Nehru's "Philosophy": May 1959

From the start of the Tibet revolt on 10 March, to the release of the Dalai Lama's "statement" on 18 April, the Chinese leaders maintained a policy of relative public restraint toward India. Despite numerous Indian press and Parliamentary anti-Chinese sallies, they counterattacked by referring only to unnamed "Indian expansionists" and avoided criticism of Nehru in the press. They still had some hope of keeping the Chou-Nehru relationship intact and of salvaging a degree of cordiality

with him. They chose to level their attacks at Nehru's political opponents in the Praja Socialist Party and the Jan Sangh Party as well as others and to remain silent about caricature's of Mao and Chou in the Indian press.

On 18 April, the day when Chou had spoken to the NPC approvingly of Nehru's personal policy of non-interference in Tibet, the Dalai Lama issued a "statement" at Tezpur, contradicting Peiping's claims that he was being held under duress and that the Chinese had not violated the Sino-Tibet autonomy agreement, and calling for Tibetan "independence." The statement had been issued with the reluctant consent of the Ministry of External Affairs whose representative, P. N. Menon helped draft it and tone it down. The Chinese reacted sharply, and apparently felt that Nehru had been playing a double game with them. On 21 April, NCNA noted that now Nehru himself was planning to meet with the Dalai Lama, and that Foreign Secretary Dutt was about to arrive beforehand to make "arrangements" with the Dalai. They hinted at their appraisal that Nehru himself had deceitfully conspired to have the Dalai make the 18 April "statement". NCNA on 21 April singled out a Reuters dispatch from New Delhi and quoted the following portion:

> The Dalai Lama's statement can have come as no surprise to the Indian Government. It was drafted after several long meetings with Prime Minister Nehru's envoy /sic/, Mr. P. N. Menon at Bomdila earlier, during which its political implications must have been discussed. /Emphasis supplied/

They seemed to feel that Nehru was using the Dalai to appeal for Tibet's independence, while repeating publicly that as prime minister, he had promised that the Dalai's activities would be restricted to religious affairs. NCNA on 21 April quoted a New Delhi AFP dispatch as follows:

> The "statement" was issued apparently with the approval of the Indian government. Some observers here felt that the Indian government, in approving the Dalai Lama's "statement", wished to say indirectly certain things it would be difficult to say itself directly.

The Chinese leaders struck on 22 April, using speakers at the NPC to call down "the wrath of the entire Chinese nation" against the Dalai's "statement." The Chinese speakers criticized the Indian Ministry of External Affairs explicitly for having distributed the "statement." Nehru was not yet attacked directly, but Peiping was coming close. Thus speaker Huang Yen-pei asked why the Indian government had permitted the Dalai to engage in "political" activities after "Prime Minister Nehru" himself had declared that such activities would not be permitted. On 23 April, People's Daily commented that "certain influential figures in India" take the view that "China is weak" and "the time has come to exert pressure on China." People's Daily then warned:

> There can be no greater tragedy for a statesman than miscalculation of a situation!
>
> If the Indian expansionists are seeking to pressure China, they have picked the wrong customer.

It is difficult to determine whether the Chinese were unaware of the decisive fact that Ministry of External Affairs officials had been trying to restrain the Dalai, to presuade him not to say anything "political" and offensive regarding suppression of the Tibet revolt, and, failing that, at the last minute to tone down the anti-Chinese parts of his 18 April "statement." (It was of course virtually impossible for a leader who had fled his native land not to say anything of a "political" nature regarding the suppression of his countrymen, and this was particularly difficult in the case of Tibet because a "religious" statement about the country invariably had political significance.) In any event, the "statement" had been made and had to be countered.

On 25 April, an article in the Peiping Kuang-ming Jih-pao pointed to the role played in the release of the Dalai's "statement" by an "official of the Indian foreign ministry and a special envoy sent to the Dalai Lama." The Chinese then reprinted in People's Daily on 27 April cartoons depicting Mao and Chou as cavemen and Mao as the "abominable snowman" which had appeared earlier (in the Times of India on 25 March and the Mail on 1 April), and denounced the "insults." On 28 April, People's Daily claimed that the "Indian authorities had connived" in publishing the cartoons, and in the same issue

stated that the "sympathy for Tibet" expressed by some Indian "statesmen" was similar to British imperialist logic.

The Indian response to this Chinese propaganda attack included the handing of a note to the Chinese ambassador on 26 April from the Indian Government. Foreign Secretary Dutt gave Ambassador Pan Tzu-li the note, which recapitulated certain facts, viz. the grant of asylum to the Dalai, the dispatch of P. N. Menon to Mussorie to receive the Dalai, and the Tibetan leader's residency at Mussorie at his own request. The key point was that the Dalai's Tezpur statement was "entirely his own." The note then expressed "great regret" at the attitude taken by the Peiping newspapers and the NPC speakers which clearly challenged India's motives as being "suspect." On 27 April, Nehru, speaking in Parliament, said that the basis of the Tibet revolt must have been "a strong feeling of nationalism," that the Chinese had greatly "simplified" the facts, that India has a "feeling of kinship with the Tibetan people...and is greatly distressed at their hapless plight," and that above all "we hope the present fighting and killing will cease." The note, viewed in the context of Nehru's speech, did not deflect the Chinese leaders from their course of countering the Dalai's statement and warning Nehru to restrain the Dalai and other Chinese critics.

The Chinese leaders indicated privately that it was Nehru's responsibility to quiet continuing Indian criticism of Peiping and to restrain himself. On 26 April, Foreign Minister Chen Yi told the Indonesian ambassador that neutrals might suggest to Nehru that he restrain Indian comment. On the same day, Deputy Foreign Minister Chi Peng-fei gave the Indian ambassador Peiping's first official protest since the start of the Tibet revolt by means of an "oral statement." Chi charged that although Peiping recognized that the Indian press worked differently from the press in China, it was clear that the government of India had made no effort to control or tone it down. It was then, Chi continued, that Peiping had to begin "counterblows" to show that it did not accept Indian charges and that China would not "weakly submit" to these attacks. The Indian ambassador reported Chi's remarks to New Delhi, requesting the Ministry of External Affairs to recognize that the Chinese Communists held the view that the outbursts in the press and various public demonstrations were encouraged by the Indian government.

Nehru's 27 April speech in Parliament apparently was taken by the Chinese as another sign that Nehru was basically sympathetic toward the statements of the Dalai and those Indian political figures who were calling for real Tibetan autonomy. They planned a systematic reply, the intention of which was to warn Nehru to drop the matter in his public statements. That is, they recognized that Nehru could not, even if--as he reiterated--he wanted to, avoid discussing the political aspect of the revolt, as any statement about its "religious" aspect was necessarily a political matter. Nehru was to stop talking about all aspects of Tibet.

On 29 April, the Panchen Lama stated in Peiping that Nehru's remarks about India having no political goal in Tibet "cannot explain" the words and deeds of "certain political figures in India." On 30 April, the full text of Nehru's 27 April Parliament speech was reprinted in Peiping newspapers, and on 1 May People's Daily called on the party and the populace to "study" Nehru's speech. It was then that the Chinese sharpened their criticism of Nehru. A commentator of the Peiping Ta Kung Pao writing on 1 May referred to his speech as "interference" in China's affairs and a "misrepresentation of the situation in Tibet...It is regrettable that Prime Minister Nehru seemed to feel in speaking on 27 April that he does not have to respect the view that Tibet is an inalienable part of China." The commentator continued:

> Obviously, Prime Minister Nehru tried to cover up with the flag of "nationalism" the crimes committed by a handful of Tibetan rebels...Nehru is trying to shield the disgraceful activities of certain Indian political circles in supporting the Tibetan rebels...Even Prime Minister Nehru himself made political statements regarding Tibet... When the Chinese people could not bear it any longer and began to hit back /starting 22 April/ at the Indian expansionists, what reason does Prime Minister Nehru have for accusing the Chinese people of "using language of the cold war?" ...The fact is that leaders of the National Congress Party and some Indian Government officials have insulted and attacked the Chinese people.

By 3 May the Chinese had broadened their direct criticism of Nehru to include the matter of whether he was still a neutral. On 3 May, People's Daily stated that it was irrelevant whether the U.S. and Britain had begun to view Nehru in a more favorable light or whether Nehru "is coming closer to them," as the point is the change means an "abandonment of neutrality." On 6 May, the Chinese issued their first point-by-point rebuttal of Nehru's speech, professing distress at being "forced to argue" with him, but "as people whose affairs Nehru is discussing" deemed it necessary to point out his "errors."

The lengthy Chinese article--"The Revolution in Tibet and Nehru's Philosophy," attributed to the editorial department of the People's Daily and printed in that paper on 6 May--was a tour de force which did not really deal with Nehru's "philosophy" but rather with his views on Tibet's "autonomy." Adroit but at the same time sarcastic, the article warned Nehru to tend only his own store while the PLA went about its mop-up work against the Tibetan rebels: China and India "are busy enough minding our own business, and why should either of us poke his nose into the other's business?" At the same time, it took a long step toward establishing in print the developing Chinese Communist view that Nehru was drifting into the Western camp.

This view was hinted at in stages. "Certain bourgeois elements" in India, the article asserted, control big propaganda machines and "line up with the imperialists" on the matter of Tibet. This first blow was followed by the condescending remark that the political attitude of such bourgeois leaders was different from that of the out-and-out reactionary leaders (Rhee, Diem, Chiang, etc.) Nehru was not named at this point but as he was later on in the article identified as, in his own words of 1935,* "a typical bourgeois,"

*The authors of the article insert Nehru's views on politics only to damn him with his own words. For example, the article cites his 1935 autobiographical statement that "classes and groups...a governing and privileged class" cannot be converted or persuaded into forsaking political power, and then charges that "now"--in his 27 April speech to the Indian Parliament--"Nehru blames us for not having been able to convert the privileged ruling class in Tibet and forsaking power." The article crassly suggests that Nehru never was a socialist, for either he has rejected the views he once expressed, "or else he really did not understand the scientific Marxist methods which he had thought he understood."

the reader was led to draw the conclusion that Nehru was indeed the intended target. The article then made a more precise and pointed distinction: "Well-intentioned" Nehru is not one of these reactionaries, but he has "involuntarily been pushed" into "an important role in their 'sympathy with Tibet' movement." Nehru is indirectly identified as a member of India's "big bourgeoisie" which on the one hand has profound "contradictions" with imperialist forces but, on the other hand, has an urge for outward expansion and therefore "consciously or unconsciously" reflects the imperialist policy of intervention.

The burden of the article's remarks on Nehru suggested that perhaps Nehru had not been "involuntarily" or "unconsciously" pushed into an alliance with China's enemies. It attacked "Nehru's logic," "Nehru's attempt...to write off a class analysis" of Tibetan social strata, and "Nehru's...indirect charge" that Peiping has not won the Tibetans to friendly cooperation. It then stated:

> A group of Indians, now unfortunately including Mr. Nehru, insist that we do things according to their opinions...In his 27 April speech, Prime Minister Nehru mentioned only "mutual respect regarding the Five Principles...but did not mention "mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty"...We hope this was only an oversight.

Repeatedly, the article charged that Nehru's words on non-interference had not been matched by deeds. It accused him of a "concerted attack" on China, and asserted:

> Prime Minister Nehru in his 27 April speech rightly censured certain Indian statements and actions intended to undermine the friendly relations between China and India. Unfortunately, he followed this up with a concerted attack on the Chinese declaration against interference.

Regarding intervention, the article complains that "the head of the Indian Government has never pursued a clear-cut hands-off policy," in this way charging Nehru personally with the responsibility for the view of other Indian officials that

Tibet is a "country." India's definition of "autonomy" for Tibet--"a kind of semi-independent status" according to the article--is rejected as is the parallel drawn by "certain political figures in India" between India's suzerainty over Bhutan and Sikkim and China's "suzerainty" over Tibet:*

*Actually, the terms "dependency" and "colony" would accurately describe one aspect of Tibet's anomolous relationship with the Peiping regime between May 1951--the date on which the Sino-Tibetan autonomous agreement was signed--and March 1959. Throughout the period, the Chinese colonizers permitted, parallel with the Tibetan Preparatory Committee--the Chinese administration--a Tibetan government at Lhasa to remain intact, to have its own army and currency, and its own native rulers, who were Tibetans loyal to a native leader, the Dalai Lama. These native rulers loyal to the Dalai Lama were handled with care by the Chinese and were designated "upper-strata reactionaries" only after the March 1959 revolt. The 28 April 1959 NPC resolution on Tibet was very defensive on this final point, for it was an un-Leninist and ultra-opportunist policy which Peiping had pursued in "not looking into the past misdeeds" of these Tibetan serf-owners and in not reforming Tibetan society. According to [redacted] Mao Tse-tung's February 1957 "liberalization" speech, when the Dalai Lama refused to return to Tibet during a trip to India in 1956, "Premier Chou had to promise the Dalai that we would not proceed with the democratic reform of Tibet during the period of the second five-year plan /1958-1962/..." The March 1959 revolt changed all that, however.

New Delhi recognized Peiping's control over Tibet's foreign relations in September 1952 when it formally agreed with Chinese authorities--rather than Tibetans--to change the status of its Mission in Lhasa to that of a Consulate General. This formally ended India's direct relations with Tibetan authorities. Direct relations with the Government of the Dalai Lama had been established by the British Government of India in 1904-05 following the Younghusband Expedition and had been formalized in treaties executed in 1906 and 1910. This relationship with Tibet was maintained by the Government of India following British withdrawal in 1947, with an Indian Commissioner replacing the British Commissioner at Lhasa. Regarding India's special rights in Tibet, these were formally ended in April 1954 when New Delhi agreed to withdraw approximately 200 troops from two towns and turned over the telegraph lines. The Indian Consulate General in Lhasa was closed down in 1962.

> Tibet is definitely no protectorate--neither a Chinese protectorate, nor an Indian protectorate, nor a joint Chinese-Indian protectorate, nor a so-called buffer state between China and India. The People's Republic of China enjoys full sovereignty over the Tibet region. /emphasis supplied/

Summing up in this angry vein, the article went on to make one point "absolutely clear:" "if establishment of such a buffer zone were pressed for, it would indeed create a truly deplorable conflict where none existed before." Having administered this veiled threat of a military clash, the authors of the article subsided into praise for Nehru's general good will for China and an assurance that the argument over Tibet "will not result in feelings of hostility."

The overall appraisal of Nehru's foreign policy was that it was "generally" favorable toward "China, the Soviet Union, and other socialist states," and that "in general" Nehru advocates Sino-Indian friendship.*

This appraisal reflected the Chinese leaders' view that Nehru was not really the neutral he said he was. Regarding the border issue, New Delhi in summer 1958 had charged the Chinese with entering Indian-claimed territory at the Khunark Fort in the western sector and had sent two patrols onto the Chinese-built road in the Aksai Plain. Regarding Chinese foreign policy, Nehru had shown his disapproval of Chinese attacks on Tito in spring and summer 1958 and the Chinese military actions against the offshore islands in fall 1958. By that time--October 1958--the Chinese leaders apparently had come to the conclusion that Nehru was not "neutral" on key

*The word, "generally," was a deliberate and significant qualification, for it implied that just as a small boy can be "generally" good even if he is occasionally bad, so Nehru's policy was "generally" favorable to China but occasionally unfavorable. And Tibet demonstrated that it was becoming increasingly unfavorable, that his policy of nonalignment had not meant noninvolvement in China's affairs.

issues which pertained directly to Chinese policy. The measure of a neutral leader, in their eyes, was that he agree with all major Chinese foreign policies, or at least refrain from any criticism of them. In the Chinese view, Sihanouk is a fine example of a neutral,* while Nasir, who has challenged several of Peiping's policies, is not. Almost like Nasir, Nehru in 1958 had been challenging "the wisdom" of Chinese policies or had refused to support them. Reflecting the increasing suspicion of Nehru's attitude toward China, Chinese Communist authors at the Tashkent Writers' Conference in October 1958 had bitterly criticized India for "drifting into the Western camp," and stated that New Delhi's neutralism was a "spineless, do-nothing" policy to avoid commitments on any of the world's outstanding issues. Nehru's publicly expressed sympathy for the Tibetans strongly reinforced these suspicions and drove the Chinese leaders into their first public attack on him in the 6 May article.

The Tibetan revolt thus led to the first open exchange between China and India--an exchange in which Nehru was deeply involved and whose "moral" leadership in Afro-Asian countries probably as a result was tarnished, as considerations of national self-interest imposed restraints on him.

Regarding the border issue, Nehru was constantly constrained to keep press and Parliamentary tempers cool in order to avoid bitter criticism of the Chinese from permanently affecting, adversely, the prospect for a border settlement. He tried to keep the real extent of Sino-Indian disagreement --i.e. that the whole border was at issue with the Chinese-- from public knowledge. When asked in Parliament on 22 April 1959 whether there was any dispute about border territory, Nehru had said "we have discussed one or two minor frontier

*Following Sihanouk's trip in February 1963 to China, where the Chinese leaders tried to use him to support their position on the border dispute, the Cambodian premier stated on 28 February that:

> Mr. Liu Shao-chi said that China had observed the Cambodian friend for years to see whether the latter was sincere, whether he behaved well, and whether he deserved to be considered a friend...we have been highly appreciated because of our sincerity toward China.

The Red Flag editorial of 4 March 1963 made room for Sihanouk (and other princely friends) by expanding Mao's anti-imperialist united front formula for the first time to include not only the national bourgeoisie but "even some patriotic princes and aristocrats"--an opportunistic doctrinal formulation Peiping undoubtedly would have labeled "unMarxist" if the Russians were to have devised it.

disputes which comprise tiny tracts of territory" a mile this way or that in uninhabitated high mountains but no settlement has been reached. Nehru had declined to discuss the border issue further. In this way, he concealed the ominous import of Chou En-lai's January 1959 letter, which had indicated that there was a major dispute regarding the entire border and not just one or two tiny tracts of territory.

Mutual public Sino-Indian recriminations began to fade by late May as appeals from all sides were made--loudest by the Indian Communists who were trying to avoid an outburst of domestic indignation against the party--for maintaining Sino-Indian friendship.* Nehru had achieved considerable sucess in preventing the presence of the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan leaders in India from converting the country into a cold war battleground. Despite Nehru's restrained handling of the situation, Chou did not communicate with him directly. The Chinese leaders apparently felt that during the Tibetan developments nothing could be gained by Chou-Nehru talks or written exchanges. On the contrary, the Chou-Nehru relationship might be permanently undercut, for the only subject of real importance they could discuss would have been the Tibetan revolt, which was unacceptable, inasmuch as that was entirely a Chinese matter. Rather than make any further overtures to

*As for the Russians, their attitude toward Tibetan developments was one of "hands-off": no public defense of either side but private assurances to the Indians that Moscow had "consideration and understanding" of New Delhi's difficulties with the Chinese. At the same time, Russian plans for carrying out aid to India continued unabated.

Nehru, they apparently chose to pursue a policy of returning to silence--after having administered public warmings against interference in April and May--and remain quiet while PLA mop-up operations continued and until Indian tempers were cooled.

Although the Sino-Indian relationship gradually began to assume a surface normality, the Indian leaders were profoundly affected when confronted with the realities of Chinese military power. Foreign Secretary Dutt told Ambassador Bunker on 27 April that it was impossible for India to fight the Chinese over Tibet. If the West with all its arms and logistical depth had been unable to fight over Hungary, he asserted, "certainly India could not fight over Tibet which it is practically impossible for Indians even to reach." Dutt said that India had only sufficient military resources to resist attacks against its own territory. This realization of military helplessness--or, unpreparedness--appears to have introduced an element of fear into official Indian thinking regarding the Chinese.

The Chinese nevertheless kept a close watch on the Dalai Lama's appeals for independence. On 22 June a Chinese official handed the Indian ambassador in Peiping a formal protest regarding the Dalai Lama's 20 June press conference and in this way stimulated an official Indian disavowal of complicity on 30 June. In order to avoid a revival of Peiping's anti-India propaganda campaign, Indian officials opposed the plan of Tibetan refugee leaders to send the Dalai Lama to the UN to reopen the issue of Tibet's independence.

The Indian leaders were also profoundly affected by the realities of Chinese political opportunism. That is, they were struck by the fact that the Chinese sentiment of "friendship" for India does not run deep beneath the surface, that it was in fact not a sentiment at all but merely a cultivated outward display used for foreign policy purposes. After Peiping had been officially informed on 26 April that New Delhi was not holding the Dalai Lama "under duress," the Chinese ambassador handed an official reply to Foreign Secretary Dutt on 13 May which was couched in rude language and reiterated the Chinese charge. [redacted] the concluding part of the Chinese reply stressed that China had enemies toward the east, and it would be foolish for Peiping to antagonize the U.S. in the east and India in the west; that is, China did not want a two-front war. The impression this bit of insensate Chinese diplomacy left on top-level Indian officials, particularly on Nehru personally, was that the application of the Chou-Nehru Five Principles is, in Nehru's words, "a matter of convenience" to Peiping and the Chinese were not acting from feelings of goodwill.

The Tibetan revolt led to a large-scale effort by the Chinese to seal the border with more PLA troops than have ever before been ranged along the Sino-Indian frontier. The overall picture of establishing a greatly increased troop presence was one of moving from a policy of maintaining a few widely scattered checkposts to a policy of dotting the entire border with heavily-armed "frontier guards"--probably including, or at least directly assisted by, regular PLA units.* By mid-June

*In July and August 1959, Chinese troops seized all arms, ammunition, and ponies belonging to Bhutanese infantry units stationed at enclaves inside Tibet, centered on Tarchen (80-20E, 30-55N). Bhutan requested that New Delhi protest this violation of "traditional Bhutanese rights and authority," which New Delhi did in mid-August. [redacted] this protest on behalf of Bhutan was intended to establish New Delhi's right to act on foreign policy matters pertaining to the tiny state. Nehru declared in Parliament on 25 August that India had a treaty obligation (1951) to defend Bhutan and Sikkim in the event of any infringement of their sovereignty, which, however, he could not "imagine any foreign country doing."

1959, reports indicated a sharp drop in the flow of Tibetans reaching India, suggesting that by that time thePLA was effectively blocking almost all border passes. The overall picture of road-building emerging from the Indian reports in summer 1959 was one of intensive Chinese activity to improve their communications by making jeepable roads to the main passes all along the border and by improving existing mule and pony tracks. In mid-June, the Indians showed particular anxiety over a report that the Chinese had nearly completed the Lhasa-Yatung road, which extended the road system to the Indian border. In June it was reported to be passable to jeeps and was later--within three years--to be made usable to heavy vehicles. Rough estimates of troop dispositions on each side of the border indicated that by late summer, Chinese troops outnumbered the Indians in all sectors, and that at least in one sector were faced not by regular Indian army personnel but rather by lightly armed Indian border police. A major task of Indian armed border police and regular army personnel was to intercept Tibetan rebels coming down into Indian territory and disarm them.

The increased Chinese and Indian military presence along the border made Sino-Indian clashes almost inevitable. By mid-June, Indian patrols repeatedly reported border penetrations of more than one mile by Chinese troops in search of Tibetans, but the immediate withdrawal of the intruding troops added to New Delhi's reluctance to formally protest. The first reported Chinese border incursion occured on 15 June in the eastern sector when a group of Tibetan refugees were caught trying to cross the border into India and shot up by Chinese troops. The first serious encounter between Chinese and Indian troops was indicated in Peiping's note of 23 June charging that over 200 Indian troops had intruded into, shelled, and occupied the "Migyitun area" in Chinese territory on the eastern sector and had entered into "collusion with the Tibetan rebel bandits" entrenched there. New Delhi denied the charges on 26 June, insisting that all Tibetan refugees "were disarmed as soon as they entered Indian territory" and in any case India was in no way responsible for rebel activities in the Migyitun area. Nevertheless, the Chinese believed that the Indians were assisting some of the rebels in re-crossing into Tibet as Indian patrols became more active along the border. Two minor encounters followed: on the western sector, a six-man party of Indian police was disarmed and taken into custody by a 25-man Chinese PLA detachment near Pangong Lake on 28 July, but they were released on 18 August for the sake of "friendship"

following a formal Indian protest; on the eastern sector, a Chinese force of 200 crossed into Indian-claimed territory at Khinzemane and forced back an Indian patrol in the area on 7 August. New Delhi pointed to the Thagla Ridge in its reply of 11 August, complaining that the Chinese troops had crossed into Indian territory "as the boundary runs along the Thagla Ridge"--a claim which became a bone of contention in 1962.

The August 1959 Clash

The first armed class in the history of the Sino-Indian border dispute occured shortly thereafter. On 25 August, a Chinese troop detachment exchanged fire with a 12-man Indian picket in the area south of Migyitun, capturing four and on 26 August, a Chinese force outflanked Longju, opened fire, and forced Indian troops to abandon the post. New Delhi's protest of 28 August characterized these Chinese actions as "deliberate aggression," pointed out that "until now" New Delhi had observed a "discreet reticence" about them, but they constitute a matter "which is bound to rouse popular feelings in India." The last remark indicated that Nehru saw the August actions as the last straw and envisaged a public outburst. Until the very latest incident--the 25-26 August firefight--Nehru had maintained a position as unprovocative to the Chinese as possible. For example, on 20 August he told Ambassador Bunker that India's UN delegation would not condemn China for action in Tibet and would continue to sponsor Peiping's case for UN representation. On 25 August he told Parliament that he did not "think" any Chinese soldier had crossed into Indian territory in pursuit of Tibetans--giving Peiping the benefit of the doubt despite many reports of Chinese border crossings to capture rebels. However, the 25-26 August skirmish could not be played down and could hardly be tossed off as a minor harassment unworthy of public indignation or serious official concern. To do so would have been an unpardonable display of official callousness and of political ineptitude.

Nehru's first sally in his speech to a tense and excited Parliament on 28 August was to caution against being "alarmist" and irdulging in shouting and strong talk. Parliament members, however, were not subdued as they expressed their anxiety over the incidents and Chinese intentions along the entire border. A senior member of the Congress Party asked whether bombs could

be dropped to chase the Chinese out of the NEFA. Another asked: if India failed to defend its own territory, what would be the fate of small Asian countries which look to India for guidance? Nehru was calm: he reaffimred the Indian position that any aggression against Bhutan and Sikkim will be considered aggression against India, detailed a number of earlier border incidents, and in response to a suggestion, indicated willingness to issue a "White Paper" on Chinese border violations. Nehru in this way succeeded in keeping down violent condemnations of Peiping, but the explosive temper of Parliament and the press spread and pervaded non-official Indian thinking.

[redacted] Nehru found himself under heavy pressure to make good on the government's pledge to resist Chinese intrusions along the Tibetan frontier.

Why did the Chinese outrage Indian opinion and, more importantly, undercut Nehru, who had concealed earlier patrol encounters, by firing on Indian troops south of Migyitun and at Longju? Even if we assume* that the 25-26 August skirmishes were provoked by the Chinese, they seem to have stemmed largely from an increased Indian presence along the eastern sector of the border, along which the Indians had 8 checkposts. As noted earlier in this paper, the Chinese also suspected the Indians (and others) of providing some support to Tibetan rebels using

*We assume Chinese provocation partly because the Chinese used an enormously superior force--200 Chinese to 12 Indians--which is typical of Mao's doctrine on armed attack. Furthermore, there was a crucial change in Peiping's subsequent account. Despite the contention in the Chinese note on 2 September that Chinese troops did not cross for a single step into Longju, Foreign Minister Chen Yi admitted in a speech at Peiping on 13 September that Chinese troops now occupied Longju and there could be no question of a withdrawal.

Indian soil as a sanctuary,* and on 23 June had delivered a strong protest over the forceful Indian "occupation" of the Migyitun area and aid given the rebels from that post. Following the revolt, Indian personnel had moved up into some posts--the Chinese claimed they moved into 10--including several on Chinese territory. Inasmuch as the Indians conceded that Migyitun is on the Chinese-side of the McMahon line, it seems probable that the Chinese felt on firm political ground in starting the action to sweep the area "south of Migyitun" including Longju free of Tibetans. At the same time, the Chinese recaptured Lonju itself--the action which established a precedent for later recapture of Indian-occupied border posts. More importantly, the late August clashes point up a mode of thought which has remained an ingredient in the Chinese leaders' calculations on the border dispute: when the Indians show a temperament to advance on the ground, we must alter their frame of mind by letting military action take command over political caution. Besides, the military risk itself is negligible, because we are the stronger side.

It is this temporary subordination of the political risk involved--that is, the risk of hardening Indian opinion against them--that has seemed stupid to Western observers. To the Chinese leaders, however, Nehru is Nehru: he will always temporize rather than fight, so Peiping's loss is not a big one and is not permanent.

The August incidents had the effect of once again reminding the Indians of their military inferiority. [redacted] although Indian army officers indicated they welcomed Nehru's bringing the clashes into the open, there prevailed among them a feeling of frustration due to the Chinese advantage in lateral roads and available troop strength. The Director of Military Intelligence stated that the border posts of the Assam Rifles in the NEFA would be strengthened under army control, but indicated some trouble in immediate placement of troops due to a shortage of men acclimated to operations at high altitudes. Kashmir was the only source of reinforcements and there was some reluctance

*Mao Tse-tung and Liu Shao-chi told Indian Communist party boss Ghosh on 6 October that reliable Chinese sources had reported that the Tibetan rebels had been aided by the Indians.

to reduce the strength of forces facing Pakistan. Once again, as in March and April 1959, the Indians appear to have had a real fear of engaging the Chinese in any major actions. Foreign Secretary Dutt told deputy chief of mission Brown on 5 September that India's UN delegation would not indulge in strong words against the Chinese. India, he continued, is prepared to be firm on certain points, but "We have to be friends with the powerful country with whom we have a border of 2680 miles."

As India could not--and Nehru was disinclined to--restrain the Chinese by launching attacks at border posts, Nehru tried to restrain them politically. He moved in two directions: (1) he informed the Russians of his predicament with the Chinese and (2) appealed to any desire in Peiping for negotiating "small" border issues.

(1) Nehru had taken note of Khrushchev's silence on the PLA's crushing of the Tibetan revolt and had commented to the U.S. ambassador on 20 August that the Russians were being "very quiet." Apparently in the hope that Khrushchev would restrain the Chinese from further border attacks, New Delhi instructed the Indian ambassador in Moscow [redacted] to explain the Indian position to Khrushchev personally. Khrushchev was to be informed that a large number of notes sent to Peiping have gone unanswered and that "the Chinese have started an insidious propaganda against India among socialist and nonaligned countries." In early September, Indian Foreign Secretary Dutt formally notified the Soviet and Polish ambassadors of New Delhi's serious concern over Chinese border incursions. Dutt privately warned the ambassadors that if the incidents were to continue, New Delhi would be forced to reappraise its policy of nonalignment.

These appeals and Khrushchev's apparent concern for the USSR's whole India policy combined to spur the Russians into an effort to dissociate Moscow from Peiping's actions against India. Dutt told the American charge on 5 September that Soviet representatives in "various capitals" have been quietly indicating they deplored the recent Chinese moves.

The Soviet press carried no comment on the dispute until the TASS statement of 9 September, which established Soviet neutrality in print* and the Soviet precedent for not supporting a bloc country in a dispute with a non-bloc country. As an indication of growing Peiping-Moscow frictions, it implicitly accused the Chinese of trying to disrupt the forthcoming Khrushchev-Eisenhower meeting.

(2) Nehru's appeal to the Chinese for negotiations was conveyed in statements to Parliament on 31 August and 4 September. On 31 August he rejected suggestions for strong action against the Chinese on the ground that a "big country could not behave as though at war and hit out all around," was more conciliatory than on 2) August, and emphasized India's desire for settlement through discussion of "small border disputes" of about "a mile or two" of territory. He told one questioner that India would not try to reoccupy the Aksai Plain by force or bomb the Sinkiang-Tibet road, but would send another request that New Delhi's 8 November 1958 protest note be answered. India, he continued would seek a settlement through talks. Nehru stated that the Chinese-held Aksai Plain was all "barren land." This line--i.e., that this corner of Ladakh was after all just wasteland and not worth fighting for--was to be repeated publicly and privately, partly to minimize the importance of its loss and partly to prepare Indian opinion for eventual negotiations regarding ownership.

*The TASS statement dissociating Moscow from Peiping's India policy went far toward preserving Indian goodwill toward the Soviet Union. Discussing the TASS report in Parliament on 12 September, Nehru described it as "more or less objective" and declined to direct the Sino-Indian dispute into "wrong channels," i.e. into Soviet-Indian relations. This is how Khrushchev preferred it to be: no direct Soviet involvement but private assurances to the Indians that Moscow did not support Peiping. Following his meeting on 12 September with Khrushchev, the Indian ambassador in Moscow told the American charge there that Khrushchev took a balanced approach, did not support Peiping, and did not offer to mediate. Regarding possible Soviet mediation, Nehru told his Cabinet that in mid-October the Soviet Union had informed him that the Russians had done "as much as they were able to" in cautioning the Chinese to exercise restraint--that is, Nehru explained, the Russians were clearly not in a position to dictate to Peiping.

The Indian Prime Minister's motivation for taking an on-balance conciliatory line apparently was, just as in April, his fear of stirring up the Chinese. He told Parliament on 4 September that the security of India was one of the factors precluding action taken in anger and that in spite of the August provocations, India's objective is friendship with China. Nehru appealed by implication to the Chinese leaders to be reasonable and to realize that friendship cannot exist "between weak and strong, between a country trying to bully and the other who accepts bullying." He concluded by saying India was willing to discuss the "interpretation" of the McMahon line and the Ladakh border as well.

The Chinese at first responded by attempting to disarm New Delhi's claims that India was the victim of aggression. Foreign Minister Chen Yi on 2 September denied in a speech that China had ever encroached on the territory of another country and insisted China advocates "peaceful negotiations" to settle international disputes, and a Chinese foreign ministry note of 3 September repudiated Indian charges of aggression, accusing India in turn of "some aggression."

The next Chinese move indicated a major decision. The Chinese acted to establish in writing a definitive border position with the apparent goal of compelling Nehru to accept it. They probably estimated that his consistently conciliatory responses to their military action reflected his unwillingness to risk armed conflict. He had, moreover, indicated in his 4 September speech to Parliament that he wanted to avoid drifting toward a "recourse to arms" and preferred negotiations. If, as the Chinese probably assumed, the dispute would move to the stage of negotiations, they could, by remaining adamant, convince Nehru that the only recourse was to accept Peiping's definition of the border.

Chou En-lai began to put this plan into operation. On 8 September, one day after Nehru had submitted to Parliament a "white paper" on the Sino-Indian exchanges of recent years,

Chou sent a personal, long-delayed* letter, replying to Nehru's March letter. Chou began by professing surprise that there was a "fundamental difference" on the border issue (but not denying it), repeated his January 1959 suggestion to maintain the status quo, and called for step by step preparations for an "over-all settlement" on the basis of this status quo. He then presented a definitive, "further explanation" of the Chinese position, the basic premise being that the border "has never been formally delimited."

The gist of this position, as Chou presented it, is as follows: (1) Peiping does not recognize the McMahon line in the eastern sector. It had been secretly formalized by British and Tibetan representatives and surreptitiously attached to the Simla Treaty in 1914, which was never ratified by a Chinese government. Nevertheless, for the sake of amity along the border and "to facilitate" negotiations and a settlement of the border issue, "Chinese troops have never crossed that line." (2) The border in the middle sector--i.e., the Tibet-Uttar Pradesh border--has never been delimited ("you also agree" that this is so). (3) In the western sector--i.e. the Ladakh border with Sinkiang and Tibet--Peiping recognizes the "traditional customary line" as the boundary. This "traditional customary line" has been "derived from historical traditions" and "Chinese maps have always drawn the boundary" in accordance with this line. (4) China's border with Sikkim and Bhutan is a question beyond the scope of the immediate Sino-Indian issue and China has always respected the "proper" relations between them and India. Chou's statement that Chinese troops had never crossed the McMahon line because Peiping desired "to facilitate" negotiations and a settlement constituted an official hint that Peiping would be willing to exchange its map claim to the NEFA for Indian agreement to Chinese possession of the Aksai Plain in Ladakh. This hint of a swap was

*Nehru had complained privately in early September that he had received no reply from the "dozen or more personal letters" he had sent to Chou, according to a high Indian official. He reportedly was "deeply hurt" by this--again suggesting Nehru's recurring reluctance to accept as real the Chinese leaders' animosity and, most of all, the fact that Chou was hardboiled and not amenable to gentlemanly reason or a personal appeal.

repeated in an NCNA release of "Data on the Sino-India Border Question" of 10 September and was given added point by the claim that Indian maps on the western sector extend Indian territory "38,000 square kilometers deep into Chinese territory."

The remaining portion of the letter was an attempt to reverse Indian charges of Chinese military initiatives in August. Armed attacks launched by Indian troops on Chinese "frontier guards" at Migyitun had left these "frontier guards no room but to fire in self-defense." "This was the first instance of armed clash along the Sino-Indian border." Chinese "guard units" had been despatched to the border "merely for the purpose of preventing remanent armed Tibetan rebels from crossing the border back and forth." Chou concluded by urging Nehru to withdraw "trespassing" Indian troops and restore "long-existing state of the boundary" in order to ease the "temporary tension" between China and India. This line of "self-defense" was to be repeated on several occasions thereafter, most importantly after the 20 October 1962 Chinese attack.

Nehru's response in Parliament on 10 September indicated his further disillusionment with Chou En-lai and recognition of a more rigid Chinese policy toward him. He stated that he was beginning to doubt that the two countries spoke the same language, that "pride" is one of the factors involved in the border dispute, and that India would not submit to "bullying." Chou's letter, Nehru continued, is either a disavowal or a show of indifference to the Chinese Premier's assurances

regarding the McMahon line "three times" in their 1956 discussions.* By disavowing or ignoring these assurances, Chou had undermined "faith" so essential to friendly relations and Chinese actions now indicated Peiping "values Indian friendship to a low extent." Nehru used even stronger language in Parliament on 13 September, when he stated that Chinese military actions were a display of "pride and arrogance of a great and powerful nation." Nehru concluded by saying India would not yield on the matter of the McMahon line but was willing to discuss disagreement over "minor" border alignments. Following Foreign Minister Chen Yi's public statement in Peiping on 13 September 1959 that neutralism was a "two-faced" policy

*In his letter of 14 December 1958, Nehru stated that he had written down a "minute" immediately after his talk with Chou in India in late 1956 for a personal and confidential record. He quoted from the "minute" as follows:

> Premier Chou referred to the McMahon line and again said that he had never heard of this before though of course the Chinese Government had dealt with this matter and not accepted that line. He had gone into this matter in connection with the border dispute with Burma. Although he thought that this line, established by British Imperialists, was not fair, nevertheless, because it was an accomplished fact and because of the friendly relations which existed between China and the countries concerned, namely, India and Burma, the Chinese Government were of the opinion that they should give recognition to this McMahon line. They had, however, not consulted the Tibetan authorities about it yet. They proposed to do so. /emphasis supplied/

Nehru did not use the phrase of assurances given "three times," but stated that with regard to the McMahon line, "I remember discussing this matter with you at some considerable length. You were good enough to make this quite clear."

in general and that India, in particular, had always used "two-faced tactics," Nehru told the American Ambassador (24 September) that he recognized the Chinese had always had an "aggressive nature" which was usually manifested when they felt themselves powerful, that as people of the "Middle Kingdom" they considered themselves above everyone else, and that India was included in a "second-class" category by them. His attitude toward Chou was one of polite sarcasm: he would answer Chou's letter within a few days but need not hurry himself.

Nehru's 26 September letter to Chou and attached note established the definitive Indian position on the entire border issue and was noteworthy for its demand that the pre-condition for negotiations was Chinese evacuation of certain border posts. While India maintained its claim to the Aksai Plain of Ladakh, Nehru's letter was ambiguous on whether the Aksai Plain must also be evacuated before any talks could be held. Nehru called for evacuation of posts opened by the Chinese in "recent months," leaving room for interpretation that the ownership of the Aksai Plain, occupied in 1956-57, would still be open to settlement by negotiations. As for his personal opinion of Chou, Nehru's reappraisal is apparent. The letter abounds with such statements as "I entirely disagree with your view," "it is incorrect to say," "needless to say, such an allegation is entirely baseless," marking the end of the five-year pact of cordiality between the two premiers--a "gentlemen's agreement" never since revived by either man.

The attached note revealed for the first time that the captured leader of the Indian patrol which scouted the Aksai Plain road in mid-1958 had been placed in solitary confinement by the Chinese. Nehru's decision to surface this fact and earlier Chinese border intrusions as well as his remark that the government was legitimately criticized for having withheld all the facts reflected his estimate that it was impossible to further conceal these facts and, even if they could be concealed, this would not improve Peiping's attitude. Finally, he expressed the hope that reported large-scale movements of Chinese forces in the Tibetan border area did not signify a new policy of actively probing into Indian territory along the whole length of the border--a hint that New Delhi suspected Peiping of trying to build a military presence step by step south of the Himalayas.

To sum up, the developments of August and September 1959 led the Chinese to show their hand, to outline their "real-politik" in handling the Tibetans and Indian troops along the border, and to indicate to Nehru that they did not consider him a neutral--but rather "two-faced"--and would hereafter be even more vigilant regarding his drift to the "right." As for Nehru, he cast aside some of the illusions he had had regarding the intentions of the Chinese leaders toward India and, although maintaining his preference to temporize rather than fight, decided to indirectly warn the Chinese against any attempt to put their forces south of the border and to threaten Bhutan and Sikkim.

The October 1959 Clash

This was not the Chinese intention, which fell considerably short of an overall advance into Indian territory. The Chinese goal was two-fold: (1) probe New Delhi's willingness to begin preliminary negotiations on an overall border agreement and (2) establish a military presence along the entire border.

(1) In discussions on 5 and 6 October, Mao Tse-tung and Liu Shao-chi reportedly told Indian Communist leader Ghosh that they wanted a border settlement, were prepared to exchange NEFA for their claim in Ladakh--that is, the Aksai Plain where they had built the road connecting Sinkiang and Tibet--and would put pressure on India to negotiate. They did not make clear what they meant by "pressure." As for the McMahon line, Mao and Liu stated that they would accept it de facto with minor adjustments. They then told Ghosh that it would be necessary to develop a "proper atmosphere" especially in India before negotiations could begin. In early October, Foreign Minister Chen Yi had moved to develop such an atmosphere, informally proposing to the Indian ambassador that the "first step" would be a visit by the Vice President. On 19 October, Chou wrote a personal letter to Nehru, suggesting that Vice President Radhakrishnan visit Peiping and that this "might serve as a starting point for negotiations." Nehru was reportedly at the time encouraged that the Chinese seemed willing to talk. When the letter was finally delivered by the Chinese ambassador on 24 October, Nehru and Radhakrishnan turned the proposal down, as on 21 October Chinese military forces had clashed with a patrol of Indian border police near the Kongka Pass in southern Ladakh, capturing ten and killing nine.

(2) The Chinese apparently combined their diplomatic approach with moves to establish a military presence in disputed areas prior to negotiations, which they insisted must be centered on actual possession of territory. The Indians had, according to a People's Daily editorial of 16 September, "dispatched troops to cross the border and occupy more than 10 places belonging to China." The editorial suggested that New Delhi "withdraw its troops quickly from the Chinese territory they occupied recently:--that is, since the Tibetan revolt. By October, Chinese troops along the border apparently were operating under orders to tell Indian units to withdraw. The Indian Director of Military Intelligence stated privately on 14 October that Chinese troops came to the Indian outpost at Khinzemane in the NEFA during the period between 9 and 11 October to warn elements of the Assam Rifles for the "last and 17th time" to vacate or be pushed out "in a few days." He also stated that the Chinese had sent a warning to New Delhi, and threatened border posts in Bhutan and Sikkim.

A moveup of Indian troops to the border had been indicated by Foreign Secretary Dutt, who [redacted] stated [redacted] on 12 October that although Nehru is afraid of and dead against military action, the Indian army brought pressure on him and placed crack Indian troops along the NEFA-Tibet border: Jats, Gurkhas, Sikhs, and Rajputs. The 21 October clash did not, however, involve regular Indian army troops (despite Peiping's deliberately misleading characterization of them as "soldiers") but rather lightly equipped border police in Ladakh.

The onesided defeat inflicted on the Indian policemen near the Kongka Pass--nine killed and ten captured--suggests that the Chinese had superior numbers or firepower, or both.

According to the Chinese version (23 October NCNA release), Chinese "frontier guards" on 21 October had been "compelled" to fire in self-defense on Indian "armed personnel more than 70 in number, "after disarming three Indians on 20 October." According to the Indian version (24 October statement of the External Affairs Ministry), Chinese troops entrenched on a hill-top position opened sudden and heavy fire, using grenades and mortar, on the border police party searching for two constables and a porter, who had failed to return from patrol on 20 October. Although the Indian police fired back, they were "overwhelmed" by Chinese strength in numbers and arms.

According to the Ministry statement, the Chinese entered the southern Ladakh area near the Kongka Pass in "considerable strength" following New Delhi's 13 August claim to the territory; India was said to have no troops in the area, only police parties.*

When Nehru discussed the clash at a public meeting on 25 October, he seemed to be aware of the military handicaps under which India operated along the border in Ladakh. His approach was to temporize and warn against the "brave talk" of Indians who called for a counterattack on the Chinese. But Parliament and the press insisted on some form of Indian military action: the Hindustan Times called for limited reprisals in order to avoid demoralizing Indians and permit the feeling of helplessness to continue, and the Indian Express stated that New Delhi should now accept aid from non-Communist countries "without qualms." Nehru rejected any idea of India's abandoning its non-alignment policy at a 1 November public meeting, claiming that military aid from abroad would jeopardize India's freedom and shatter India's place in the world. India, he continued, was the one country in Asia which did not join alliances but which walked "with its head held high not bowing to anyone." He could not give an assurance that the Chinese would not cross the border, but India would defend the border "with all her might." Nehru declined to comment on the strategic measures being taken to deal with the border situation, but sought to explain why the Ladakh border was not protected by forces in larger numbers: "we thought that the Chinese would not resort to force in the Ladakh area." In addition, if India had placed a "large army" in Ladakh, it might have been cut off and could not have been shifted easily in the event of an emergency elsewhere on the border.

*The size of the Chinese force is not known. An Indian official privately stated shortly after the clash that they had no prior information regarding the presence of Chinese troops in the Kongka Pass area and that after the clash they were really in "no better position to know" just what the Chinese were doing in Ladakh.

How much of what Nehru said about New Delhi's reasons for not stationing more troops in Ladakh represented actual Indian military thinking is uncertain. A different reason was provided by Army Chief of Staff General Thimayya at the Governors' Conference on the border dispute convened by Nehru in late October. Thimayya [redacted] told President Prasad and Finance Minister Desai that he had proposed taking the "necessary military steps" against the Chinese after it was discovered that they had built a road through the Aksai Plain, but Defense Minister Krishna Menon had turned down his proposals on the ground that the "main military danger" is on the India-Pakistan border: "we cannot afford to reduce or divert any of our strength from that sector." Thimayya stated that he had Menon's rejection "in writing."

Thimayya's statements establish a link between Krishna Menon's and Nehru's apparent strategic estimate that the Pakistanis were more of a direct military danger than the Chinese--an estimate almost certainly reflecting the deep religious and parochial animosities involved in the entire Kashmir dispute. The Kashmir dispute had engendered in Nehru's thinking more intense feelings of anger and resentment than had the Sino-Indian border dispute. Thus Nehru and Menon had shown a greater inclination to hate the non-Communist Pakistanis than the Communist Chinese.

The main military problem faced by the Indians in late October was to determine the extent to which troops could be moved from the frontier with West Pakista without drastically weakening Indian forces there. Despite the understanding reached on the East Pakistan border problems and the conciliatory overall Pakistani posture,* the Indians--including Thimayya--

*Ayub and Nehru met for the first time in September 1959 and agreed on the need to reduce tensions between Karachi and New Delhi and to plan their relations on a "rational" basis. The direct outcome of this meeting was a conference in October at which both sides agreed to certain adjustments of the border between India and East Pakistan and established "ground rules" to prevent new incidents.

felt they could not strip the Pakistan border to man the entire border with China. The decision was made to reduce the reserve forces in the Punjab without reducing major deployments in Jammu- Kashmir. The first division-level redeployment of Indian troops into the border area following the October 1959 clash was reported to be the transfer of the 4th Division, stationed in reserve at Ambala (Punjab) to Missamari in the Kameng division of the NEFA, with headquarters apparently at Tezpur. The Division's assignment was to man present and "additional" posts on the western half of the NEFA border. However, the Indians set about immediately to raise a new division (the 17th) in Ambala, so great was their concern regarding Pakistan.

The alternative courses of military action apparently considered by the Indians in late October 1959 were (1) to prepare to initiate action to recapture India-claimed territory in Ladakh held by the Chinese or (2) to concentrate on preventing penetration of the rest of the border while accepting the Chinese presence in Ladakh, virtually writing it off. They apparently decided on (2).

Nehru was responsible for the decision, and began to prepare Indian public opinion for the cession of Chinese-occupied sections of Ladakh. The procedure used was simply to reassert the line that most of Ladakh was wasteland. Nehru is reliably reported to have stated in late October sessions of the External Affairs subcommittee that he was willing to begin open negotiations on the determination of the Ladakh border. He emphasized that the disputed area of Ladakh is of "very little importance--uninhabitable, rocky, not a blade of grass"--and went on to imply that he would not be averse to the ultimate cession of that part of eastern Ladakh claimed by the Chinese. In conversations at the time with army and government officials, members of the American embassy staff were told that the Aksai Plain is not regarded as strategically important or useful to India. The Indians stated repeatedly that it is a "barren place where not a blade of grass grows." Both Foreign Secretary Dutt and Vice President Radhakrishnan complained bitterly that Nehru was on the way to selling out the Aksai Plain.

The developing line about the strategic insignificance of the Aksai Plain was strengthened by the Indian military estimate that the Plain was indefensible anyway. General Thimayya's estimate was that the ridge line of the Karakoram Range is the only defensible frontier

in the entire Ladakh area. Thimayya stated that therefore part of the Tibet Plateau east of the ridge line shown as Indian territory on New Delhi's maps was "militarily indefensible," and by implication there was really no strategic reason for recapturing it from Chinese troops even if it were possible to do so in the face of "preponderant Chinese military power." This view provided Nehru with another rationalization for his talk rather than fight decision. He also stated privately that the entire border in Ladakh is undefined, that few Indians live in the area, that there has never been any real administration there, and that therefore he is not sure that all the territory claimed in Ladakh belongs to India.

However, Indian officials were well ahead of Nehru in the desire to take a harder line with the Chinese. When, on 29 October, Nehru was informed by telegram that the Chinese had told the Indian ambassador that their troops were merely occupying Chinese territory and there could be no question of withdrawals prior to negotiations, Nehru drafted a reply which President Prasad disliked on the grounds that it "lacked firmness." Only after this objection did Nehru strengthen the language in his note of 4 November.*

In this note, New Delhi avoided the line which Nehru had been developing regarding the strategic insignificance of the Aksai Plain. The Aksai Plain was specifically declared to be Indian territory. Peiping was warned that incursions south of the McMahon line would be considered "a deliberate violation"

*Nehru had a long way to go to catch up with the public mood in India as well. All American consulates general in India by 4 November had reported press and public condemnation of the Chinese and continued criticism of Nehru's soft line of late October. As part of the "Throwback the Aggressors Day" (4 November), several thousand students demonstrated in front of the Chinese Communist embassy in New Delhi and later went to Nehru's office with a memo requesting immediate military action. The students reportedly were encouraged by former Indian Army Commander-in-Chief Cairappa, who told the students to go ahead, and appealed to all Indians to be men of "guts and action," not just "men of words."

of Indian territory. The August and October clashes were said to be "reminiscent of the activities of the old imperial powers," and an annexed report gave the view of the senior surviving Indian police officer to the effect that October clash was initiated by the Chinese, who fired first "using heavy weapons." Despite the note's implication that only "minor frontier disputes" were negotiable, it did not make Peiping's recognition of Indian claims to the Aksai Plain a pre-requisite for talks.

Had it not been Nehru, but rather a more military-minded man who occupied the post of prime minister in late October 1959, a priority program to prepare India eventually to fight would have been started. In the course of two months, India had been humiliated by two military defeats and the public and government officials had been aroused to anger against the nation's enemy as never before in its short history. But Nehru insisted that war with China was out of the question, and apparently did not think the challenge justified the economic burden of increased military spending. A man of different temperament and background, no less aware of the hard facts of Indian military inferiority, might nevertheless have felt that the country must be mobilized to prepare for long-due military revenge against the Chinese at all costs. Guts and action, not words, was the military man's attitude in late October. This was not Nehru's way, however, and his authority and prestige in the country (although questioned more extensively than ever before) were still sufficiently great to reject preparedness for an eventual recourse to arms.

At an emergency cabinet meeting in late October Nehru indicated that border fighting did not constitute a threat to India. The strategic Chinese threat, he maintained, lies in the rapidly increasing industrial power base of China as well as the building of military bases in Tibet. The only Indian answer, he continued, is the most rapid possible development of the Indian economy to provide a national power base capable of resisting a possible eventual Chinese Communist military move. Nehru seemed to believe that the Chinese could not sustain any major drive across the "great land barrier" and that the Chinese threat was only a long-term one.

Nehru's statements along the line that the Chinese military threat was not immediate but long-range may have reflected the strategic assessment made by his military leaders. The problem of logistics was so enormous, in their view, that the

Chinese would find it "impossible" to initiate and sustain a major offensive into and through Ladakh and the NEFA. Thimayya's estimate was that the Karakoram Range crest-line in the west and the crests of the Himalayan main range in the east provide effective land barriers against a major Chinese military push. Thimayya held the view in late October that any Chinese venture in force into the Ladakh area would be reckless "in view of Chinese supply and transport problems" and that the defensive capabilities of even limited Indian armed forces in this terrain would be formidable.

To what extent these views reflected a mere rationale for New Delhi's failure to strike back at Chinese forces on the border is conjectural. Certainly Nehru's idea of first building a national economic base is a platitude in the context of the border dispute. The idea that the Chinese would face insurmountable logistics problems in the event of a major drive south, however, seemed to be firmly fixed in Indian military thinking. On balance, Indian estimates of Chinese capabilities and intentions along the border supported Nehru's policy of no-war and a negotiated settlement.