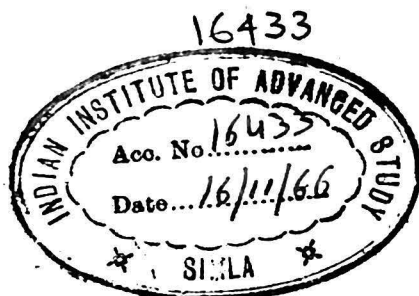


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THE INDIA-CHINA FRONTIER DISPUTE

By JOHN CONNELL

Report of a lecture delivered to the Royal Central Asian Society on Wednesday, March 23, 1960, Sir Philip Southwell, C.B.E., M.C., in the chair.

The CHAIRMAN: My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, it gives me much pleasure, on behalf of the Royal Central Asian Society, to welcome Mr. John Connell who is going to speak to us about "The India-China Frontier Dispute." Mr. Connell is known, perhaps to most of us, as an author and writer with a critical mind, also as one with some knowledge of the area about which he is to speak, he having spent some time in India and having been there at the end of the last war as Chief Press Military Censor. It seems to me that today Mr. Connell has a rather big task because I cannot imagine a more difficult but at the same time more interesting subject to study. There are probably present many who, like myself, have no more than a superficial knowledge of this problem and we in particular will be most interested to hear what Mr. Connell has to tell us, so without further delay I call on him.

I STAND amazed at my presumption. A few weeks ago you did me the honour of electing me to this Society, and you linked this great honour—for as such I regard it—with an invitation which was a challenge. I could no more resist the challenge than decline the honour. I, therefore, find myself addressing a gathering, every member of which, I suspect, has a deeper knowledge and experience than I could ever possess of the theme which I propose to discuss. Any attempt at an apology, or indeed any show of diffidence, would be both superfluous and impertinent.

What I intend to do, therefore, is to tell you a story. I am a novelist; I was for many years a journalist, a reporter and commentator; I think of myself now primarily as a biographer and historian. My basic quality as a writer is that of narration. I, therefore, propose to offer you, pieced together from such evidence as is at present available, a narrative account of the Indo-Chinese Border Dispute, giving at the outset this obvious but important warning—the story is not ended yet. Unfinished as it is, I discovered, as I began to unravel it and to see its proportions and its significance, that it is completely enthralling; it excites you, it grips you and it will not let you go. It contains the one essential element of dramatic narrative—conflict. There is in it the clash of arms; rifle-fire spits and snarls across high, remote passes and desolate, snow-bound hillsides; but this is only a manifestation of a much more profound and awe-inspiring conflict between minds and souls. Though it is at bottom tragic, it is not without a streak of rough, ironic comedy; for one of the two principal characters in it is not Oedipus or Orestes, Macbeth or Hamlet; he is Malvolio, monstrously gulled and ill-used; and we classify *Twelfth Night* as a comedy.

I am now going to demonstrate the extent of my temerity. I have involved a few, and horribly cumbersome, word, and I am going to ask you

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to accept it. It is only possible, I believe, to attain some comprehension of this issue if one considers it in politico-psychological terms. I have not been brought to bed of this monster of a word without painful travail; but sprawling and ugly as it is, I believe it to be necessary. For I am convinced that it is very difficult, if not quite impossible, to get even a glimmering of what India and China are quarrelling about if one thinks of it merely politically. Here is a great and apparently almost irreconcilable conflict between two outlooks, two ways of life. The two greatest nations in Asia are at odds with each other; but the different outlooks, the different ways of life, which have precipitated the clash are not, on either side, natively Asian. Two social, economic and political philosophies, born and nurtured in Western Europe, have run head on into each other in the Himalaya and the Karakoram. I think the clash has shocked and irritated both sides, not only by its violence but by the intensity and the tenacity of the feelings it has aroused; but it is fair to conclude that it was inevitable.

The Republic of India, under Nehru's leadership, is steeped in British ideas, customs, practices and disciplines. The British way of life, though in origin alien to India, has been taken for granted by generations of educated Indians. The British Raj was debated out of existence in accordance with Parliamentary procedure and the fundamental tenets of British political philosophy. How long this pervasive British influence will remain is, of course, arguable; but at present, thirteen years after the end of the Raj and with Mr. Nehru in his seventies, it is a factor, in Indian life and in the pattern of world politics, of considerable significance. Talk to any Indian diplomatist or official here in London, in Ottawa, in Oxford or in any other city in the world, and you are conscious that he speaks the same language as yourself, not only verbally but at much deeper levels. To Indians and usually, I think, to ourselves, this is a truism; but it has proved to be a truism with very sharp teeth.

The Chinese experience has been radically different from the Indian. Whatever *rapprochement* there was between China and the liberal, democratic West has been wiped out; any intellectual and spiritual ties have been abruptly severed. After a century or more in which Imperial China slithered into social, political and economic chaos, the Communists conquered the country in the late nineteen-forties as, thirty years earlier, the Communists conquered Russia. And while the nation at large—if it is strictly accurate to speak of China as a nation, which I doubt—is being subjected to the whole ruthless process of Communist development, its leaders are sternly convinced that they are the masters of the citadel of Marxist orthodoxy, and that the Soviet Union is perilously deviationist. And they couple their rigid adherence to Marxism, in the letter and in the spirit, with naked colonialist and expansionist aims, in no whit different from those of the Russians in respect of Central Asia and the Baltic republics.

It is the irony of the story that the pursuit of the most ambitious and far-reaching of these aims should have brought China into conflict with India. The Chinese may appreciate the irony: the Indians do not. India became an independent, sovereign State in 1947. The Communists finally

overthrew the Kuomintang and consolidated their authority over China as a whole in 1949. There then ensued a strange, protracted and lopsided love-affair, the course of which I do not propose now to follow in any detail.

It lasted, however, for nearly a decade, and its importance in the whole history of the political emergence of Asia cannot be too strongly stressed, both in the wish-fulfilment fantasies which were its origin and its sustenance, and in the disillusionment and bitterness which followed its collapse. On the Chinese side it was from the outset a sheer matter of cold-blooded expediency, and of the relentless exploitation of Indian sentiment. I have no doubt of the depth and sincerity of that sentiment, in part an expression of a sense of companionship in the enterprise of throwing off subordinate and dependent status, and in part a naïve, self-righteous and very blind priggishness. One of the most brilliant and subtle Indians of his generation, K. M. Panikkar, had what seemed to be an outstandingly successful term of office as Indian Ambassador in Peking from 1948 to 1952—a period which included the Korean War—and although India's foreign policy was based firmly on the principle of neutralism, the temptation, in such circumstances, to adopt the lofty and spiritually satisfying pose of mediator between East and West was too strong to be resisted. It was a pose which became an addiction. It manifestly appealed to the Indian temperament, and for some years it suited the Chinese book.

The love-affair—and I repeat that it must be regarded as such only from the Indian side—survived almost unbruised the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1950. It appeared to be bearing fruit when Chou-En-Lai visited New Delhi in June, 1954, and issued, with Nehru, the famous statement expounding the Pancha Shila, the five principles, of the most exalted character, which ought to govern international relationships. The most important of these principles, it is worth recording almost without comment, were: peaceful co-existence between nations, non-interference in the affairs of other nations, and mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial rights.

The Indian sense of commitment to this love-affair was at its fullest less than a year later at the Afro-Asian Conference at Bandung, in April, 1955, which Chou-En-Lai attended. Was his performance then a superb piece of duplicity and effrontery? An almost contemporary assessment by Mr. Guy Wint is not without a sombre interest:

“For five days the countries of Asia which feared Communism expressed their apprehensions about China's plans. A new Communist imperialism by China had replaced the old Western imperialism as a main danger to Asia. Chu-En-Lai dealt with the attacks with skill and dignity . . . he breathed friendliness and conciliation. He was ready to settle with any Asian country the status of overseas Chinese, disputed frontiers, and any other matters which caused friction with China. He was affable and approachable . . . in fact he could hardly have been more conciliatory. . . . Yet when the conference broke up it was clear to everybody that the problem of how the rest of Asia was to live with China had become a prime

one for the continent. The old disputes were sinking back into the past. The old scenes and enthusiasms appeared out of date."

To India the problem seemed, during the next four years, soluble, in accordance with Pancha Shila. It erupted into intense and urgent reality just a year ago, in March, 1959, with the Tibetan national uprising, its ferocious suppression by the Chinese, and the flight of the Dalai Lama into exile in India. From 1950 onwards, a mild Indian protest against the Chinese invasion having then been contemptuously rejected, the Indian Government's attitude towards Tibet was one of scrupulous—some might say over-scrupulous—non-interference, carried (as *The Times'* correspondent in Delhi remarked last year) to the length of diplomatic blindness to every inconvenient fact. Deliberate silence was the ally of deliberate blindness. Inevitably the External Affairs Department of the Government of India was the principal—indeed virtually the only—source of information about what was happening in Tibet; and over the years it kept remarkably mum.

The shock was all the greater, therefore, when it became impossible either to suppress or ignore the story of the Tibetan rebellion, its gravity and its extent, and the savagery with which the Chinese reacted. This shock was the inescapable consequence of the years of soft-peddalling. Nehru's prestige slumped sharply, in India and throughout the world; he was rebuked—justly rebuked—for having scornfully dismissed the preliminary warnings of the outbreak as "bazaar rumours," and for having even later talked smugly of "a clash of minds rather than arms." It soon became clear that this was a national uprising, as spontaneous, as brave and as desperate—and as ill-fated—as that of Hungary two and a half years earlier. Whatever there might have been anomalous or confusing about Tibet's national status, however historically well-founded China's claims to suzerainty, these were no excuses for the brutality with which the Chinese dealt with the situation as it confronted them, and they were in a sense irrelevant. For, though the Chinese bitterly resented being reminded of it, Mao-Tse-Tung, in the constitution which he formulated for the "Chinese Soviet Republic" in 1931, specially named the Tibetans as amongst the minorities who were to enjoy the right to "complete separation from China" if they so desired. As one British newspaper pointed out: "Their desire has never altered; Mao's words have."

On March 23, 1959, with Chinese artillery and aircraft in action, with the Indian Consulate-General in Lhasa isolated and under siege, Mr. Nehru told the Indian Parliament that the situation was difficult and delicate, and urged that "we should avoid doing anything that will worsen it." "We have," he went on, "no intention of interfering in the internal affairs of China, with whom we have friendly relations."

This was an accurate summary of India's policy towards China for a decade; it is not to be disdainful either of its sincerity or its tenacity of purpose to hear in it echoes of the British Government's policy towards Nazi Germany from 1935 to 1939. Appeasement need be neither immoral nor dishonourable; it can be gravely and tragically mistaken, and recognition of its mistakenness may come too late for it to be rectified except at

appalling cost. This is what happened to Neville Chamberlain's policy of appeasement in Europe in the nineteen-thirties; it remains still to be seen whether it will befall Jawaharlal Nehru's policy of appeasement in Asia in the nineteen-fifties.

It is not necessary to trace the course of the Tibetan rebellion in detail. It is enough to record here that on March 25, 1959, the Kashag, the Supreme Tibetan Cabinet, issued a unanimous declaration denouncing the seventeen-point Treaty of May, 1951, with China, on the grounds of persistent violations by the Chinese, proclaiming Tibet, in consequence, to be independent, and calling on the Chinese occupation forces to withdraw. It was a gesture of heroic national defiance, with no effect at all on the grim realities of the situation. By the end of the month the Dalai Lama and a number of his Ministers were in flight towards India, Lhasa was under curfew, and the Chinese were able to announce that they had completely crushed the insurgents.

On April 3, after a fortnight of perilous and very rough travel, and of hairbreadth escapes, the Dalai Lama reached India, and members of Parliament in Delhi cheered when Mr. Nehru gave them the news. India could do no less than treat him as an honoured guest, and offer him and his entourage sanctuary. A decision of this character was bound to mark a turning-point in Sino-Indian relations, but Mr. Nehru was unable to conceal both his embarrassment and his irresolution. These are serious criticisms of a statesman of Mr. Nehru's calibre, but they are mild beside the strictures, from many sections of Indian opinion, to which he had to submit last summer.

For Indian emotions about what happened in Tibet were, and are, strong, sad and self-critical. To Mr. Nehru it was of great importance throughout the earlier part of last summer to preserve the two façades of neutralism and of friendly relations with China. The question to which there was no comfortable answer was: How interested were the Chinese in helping him in this effort? In expounding his policy of restraint Mr. Nehru might talk, in vague but noble terms, about "the larger causes which we hold dear"; but did the Chinese, in fact, give a damn for these larger causes?

In Tibet itself they showed singularly little restraint, they took no half-measures. Various attempts have been made to piece together a coherent account of events in Tibet after the crushing of the revolt and the Dalai Lama's flight. Some twelve thousand refugees filtered out into India, and from the stories which they told it was clear that the Chinese had intensified their policy of rapid and relentless colonization, little different from that which the Russians pursued in Turkestan more than a quarter of a century earlier. Meanwhile in India the Dalai Lama went to live at Mussoorie under courteous but careful surveillance. The Indian Government wished to regard him as a sheerly religious exile, granted a safe retreat in which he might, without harm to anybody, receive due homage from a few exiles and refugees. But this was not at all the part which he sought to play. He was no Cardinal York in gentle and resigned acceptance of defeat at the end of a long, futile struggle. He saw himself—and his followers saw him—as "the god-king of a proud, angry and courageous

people who had come to demand moral recognition and help in the name of religion, from those who profess to believe in it, against the forces of materialism.”*

The first statement which he made on Indian soil left little room for doubt as to his views and intentions. He said emphatically that he had come to India of his own free will and not under duress. He spoke of his country's unceasing struggle for liberty; and of his fervent hope that the troubles in which it was now involved would soon be over without further bloodshed. His statement concluded: “As Dalai Lama and spiritual head of all the Buddhists in Tibet, my foremost concern is to ensure the well-being of my people and the perpetual flourishing of my sacred religion and the freedom of my country.”

This was no abdication, no tame surrender to the oppressor. But on the same day, April 19, Chou-En-Lai, presenting his report to the National People's Congress in Peking, said that the rebellion by a handful of reactionaries in Tibet had been ignominiously defeated, that the measures subsequently taken had been warmly welcomed by the broad mass of patriotic people in Tibet, both clerical and lay, and that this was “a great victory for our policy of national unity.”

He asserted that the Dalai Lama had been abducted to India, but that it was China's hope that he would soon be able to free himself from the hold of the rebels and return to the Motherland.

His speech contained a sour sop to India: “Prime Minister Nehru has issued successive statements on non-interference in China's internal affairs, and in favour of the continued consolidation of friendly Chinese-Indian relations. There is a friendship of over 2,000 years between China and India which, moreover, are initiators of the five principles of peaceful co-existence. There is no reason at all why either of our two countries should let out mutual friendship and the principles of foreign relations, adhered to by our two countries jointly, be shaken on account of a handful of Tibetan rebels.”

But not all the speeches made at the National People's Congress were even superficially as amiable as Chou-En-Lai's. On April 27 Mr. Nehru saw fit, in a long and detailed statement in Parliament in Delhi, to rebuke responsible people in China for “using the language of the cold war regardless of truth and propriety”; and he dismissed as “both unbecoming and devoid of substance” charges against India which had been made at the Congress, and in Chinese newspapers and on the air.

One of the most significant of the Chinese allegations, in view of what was shortly to happen, was that “Indian expansionists had inherited the British tradition of imperialism.” Mr. Nehru, perfectly genuinely in my opinion, was both baffled and hurt by this accusation, which he described, a little forlornly, as “strange.” He made his ritual obeisance to the totem of anti-imperialism by describing the Younghusband expedition to Lhasa in 1904 as “an unjustified and cruel adventure,” but pointed out that independent India had voluntarily surrendered extra-territorial rights in Tibet, withdrawn Army detachments, and handed over postal and telegraph installations. This was a sound defensive argument so far as it

*George Patterson, *The Daily Telegraph*, April 15, 1959.

went; what Mr. Nehru could not at that time be expected to foresee was the way in which the Chinese were planning to use this gambit.

Perhaps an appropriate subtitle for my talk might have been "A Study in Appeasement"; but I emphasize that I do not use that word in a pejorative sense. However, if the leaders of the nation which you are trying to appease are cunning and faithless, there are certain dismal corollaries to a persistent policy of this character. The first is that, crediting them with better intentions than they in fact possess, you prevent yourself from anticipating the unscrupulous moves which they are preparing; you are playing fair, and they are cheating. And the second corollary is that, at each crucial phase in the process, at each revelation that you have been both practically out-manœuvred and morally betrayed, your indignation is apt to be equalled by your immediate impotence to do anything practical about it.

In India the mood of impotent indignation was endemic for most of last summer. But supremely susceptible as he ordinarily is to his country's temper, Mr. Nehru was curiously reluctant to translate this mood into action by a deliberate and, it might well have proved, timely reorientation of his own policy. He drifted back into embarrassment and platitudes. So noticeable was this drift that one of his staunchest friends in England, *The Guardian*, was stirred to a remarkably outspoken rebuke. Mr. Nehru, displaying another facet of that curiously recurrent insensitivity which had afflicted him at the time of the Hungarian crisis, observed: "It is a deeper tragedy for many of us even than the events in Tibet that something we have laboured for in the Five Principles and at Bandung should have suffered in people's minds and become depreciated."

This was more than *The Guardian* could stomach. "Principles do not bleed when they are shot in the back"; it said tartly, "Tibetans do. Indian relations with China are determined by more than words . . . and if words come to mean more to the Indian Government than the sufferings and liberties of human beings, then the mentality of the cold war will have won another big victory."*

For a little longer the dispute between India and China remained in the realm of words; but they were words, it has to be admitted, that were related to terrible deeds. In June, Mr. Purshottam Trikamdas, senior advocate of the Supreme Court of India, published the preliminary results of an investigation which he had made into the Tibetan catastrophe on behalf of the International Commission of Jurists.

Mr. Trikamdas listed, as part of the systematic policy of turning an independent country by force into a province of China, a series of actions that were characteristic of imperialism in its blackest aspects: the denial of freedom of religion; the denial of freedom of information; the conscription to forced labour of 200,000 men, women and children, with the consequent casualties from hunger, cold and fatigue; the arbitrary confiscation of private, religious and Tibetan Government property; and the wholesale murder, imprisonment and deportation of those opposed to the régime. He estimated, from the sources of information available to him,

**The Guardian*, May 16, 1959.

which he considered reliable, that the total number of victims of the mass killings was no fewer than 65,000.

The Dalai Lama, at a Press conference at Mussoorie a fortnight later, reiterated this grim figure; he could not give statistics on the number of deportations, but he said that 1,000 monasteries had been destroyed, that more than five million Chinese settlers had already been brought into Tibet, and that another four million were coming.

This is surely up to the level of the achievements of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, and makes the long-ago colonization efforts of the English in Ireland and the westward expansion of the United States seem by comparison amateurish attempts at genocide.

No title could, therefore, have been more apt than that which Sir Olaf Caroe gave to the characteristically learned and illuminating talk which he delivered to this Society last October: *Tibet, The End of an Era*. It was a deeply tragic climax to a momentous phase in Asian history. Its closest recent analogy is Hitler's conquest of the post-Munich remains of Czechoslovakia in the spring of 1939. In 1959 there was in Asia, as twenty years before in Europe, a brief pause while the aggressor digested his prey.

Short as it proved to be, it was a grimly ominous lull. Mr. Nehru went off on a visit to Afghanistan. In Delhi itself, as I am sure there is no need to remind anyone in this audience, the weeks between the middle of May and the beginning of August are not a markedly suitable time for overmuch cerebral activity, whether in the political, the diplomatic or any other field. But last year beneath the surface appearance of hot-weather inactivity, or greatly curtailed activity, there was an atmosphere of brooding disquiet, and an increasing volume of criticism of the Government, and of Mr. Nehru in particular.

The focus of the irritation undoubtedly was the sense that there seemed to be no limit to the appeasement of China. Indian currency had been declared illegal in Tibet, Indian nationals were being harassed and driven out of the country, Peking had launched a violent propaganda campaign demanding the absorption into China of Sikkim, Bhutan and Ladakh, and there were rumours that Chinese troops were massed along the frontiers of the first two of these three States. Mr. Nehru, though still convinced that a continued policy of patience and restraint in the face of Chinese intransigence was the best way of convincing China of the sincerity of Indian neutralism, was not unaware of the magnitude of the Chinese threat, and not unaware of the depth and strength of popular feeling in India. His problem—and it was not the first time that he had been confronted by it—was to master and control popular feeling and not let himself be driven along with it. But this, of course, was only a tactical problem. The much more fundamental issue was strategic: had his strategy been wrong from start to finish?

For the effects of appeasement were now clearly to be seen on India's own threshold, along her own frontier and those of her small neighbours for whose protection she had assumed a measure of responsibility. As one uncharitable critic remarked, India was now called upon to *do* something instead of standing on the sidelines uttering noble sentiments. The

Chinese, having consolidated their position in Tibet, now began a series of encroachments and infiltrations at a number of vulnerable points along the 2,500 miles of common frontier. It is of some historical significance that the first of these aggressive incursions into Indian territory occurred at the end of July and the beginning of August, and that the news of them was suppressed until the last days of August. But it was impossible to stop the circulation of rumours, many of them, as subsequent events were to prove, only too well-founded.

Mr. Nehru's first steps to counter the Chinese activities were cautious. He began by trying to define the aggression which India would resist. He affirmed and reaffirmed unequivocally that India would defend the McMahon Line. This line, it is needless to remind this audience, was laid down in 1914 after negotiations between the Government of India and representatives of the Governments of China and Tibet. It marks the boundary between Tibet and India's North-East Frontier Agency. Although the Agreement was accepted by the Indian and Tibetan Governments, it was only initialled by the Chinese representative, and it was rejected by the then Chinese Government in Peking, who refused to ratify it. Their objection, however, was not to the McMahon Line as a frontier between India and Tibet, but to the proposed line of demarcation between Inner Tibet, under Chinese administration, and Outer Tibet, governed from Lhasa. This objection apart, the McMahon Line, which geographically is the natural frontier, was accepted and administered as the political frontier by the authorities on either side of it for well over forty years.

Mr. Nehru followed his statement on the McMahon Line with an equally firm declaration about the two small, independent mountain States of Sikkim and Bhutan. He told the Indian Parliament on August 25: "I cannot imagine any foreign authority doing anything which is an infringement of their sovereignty. In the event any such infringement would be an infringement of our undertaking with Sikkim and Bhutan . . . We know that it is our responsibility to defend them in the case of any attack." In answer to one of a long series of supplementary questions, he repeated, "We are responsible for their defence."

Mr. Nehru is the product of his period and his environment. His pronouncements were and are impeccably dignified and civilized, in complete accordance with diplomatic procedure as it is understood in Britain, the Commonwealth and the Western world as a whole. The Chinese, brought up in a harsher school, set no great store by these niceties. They act first and argue later.

On August 28, when the Indian Government—with singularly little satisfaction—had been exchanging Notes with the Chinese Government for nearly a month—Mr. Nehru rose in the Upper House of the Indian Parliament to answer a special notice question. He disclosed that on July 28 a small Indian police patrol, consisting of one officer and five constables, on their way to the Khurnak Fort in Kashmir, had been arrested by a numerically stronger Chinese detachment, at a point several miles inside the border; the Chinese, holding the Indian policemen as their prisoners, then set up camp. The Government of India protested, the prisoners were released, but the Chinese refused to move out, saying that the territory

they were occupying was part of China. Another Note was despatched from Delhi, expressing surprise at this claim; Peking did not deign to reply.

In the course of the same statement Mr. Nehru revealed that the Chinese had built a road from Gartok in Tibet to Yarkand in Turkestan, which cut across the North-Eastern corner of Ladakh, well within the borders of India. He then dealt with two recent incidents at the other end of the frontier. On August 7 a small Indian patrol of a dozen policemen in the Kameng Frontier Division in Assam ran into a sizeable party of Chinese, some 200 strong and fully armed; there was a good deal of rather inconclusive argument, some shoving and pushing, but no firing. In a similar affray in the Subansiri Frontier Division on August 25 the Chinese had, Mr. Nehru, asserted, opened fire. He added, a trifle laconically, "There has been a similar forcible occupation of Indian territory at Longju."

On August 31 he had a little more information about Longju. The Chinese had surrounded an Indian police outpost there on August 26; two Indians had got away, but had not made it clear in their subsequent report whether the Chinese had actually captured the post or were simply patrolling round it. Mr. Nehru went on to enunciate his views on the issue of border control as a whole.

"It is not possible," he said, "to prevent incursions over a frontier of more than 2,000 miles, but it is possible to take some steps to repulse incursions and to strengthen defences. While it doesn't make much difference physically to India or China whether a mile or two in the high mountains belongs to them or to us, it does matter very much if a treaty is broken or an aggressive attitude taken. When, therefore, such matters occur, we have to follow a double policy—defend our countries and settle the matters by conference."

He went on to make a careful distinction between happenings in Ladakh, where nobody knew with any precision where the frontier lay, and incidents in the North-Eastern Frontier Agency with a recognized and long-accepted frontier in the McMahon Line. The Chinese action there, he said, was, in the Indian view, "a clear case of aggression."

He emphasized, however, that he was not going to be bulldozed into hasty action. "One restrains oneself," he said, "one tries to settle matters by discussion." One does indeed; but what happens if the other party to a dispute does not regard discussion as a two-way street?

For the outside observer of these events, who possesses the far from negligible advantage of being able to look back over several months, it is difficult not to feel a considerable degree of both admiration and compassion for Mr. Nehru. He was not in his favourite posture, high above the sordid struggles of *machtpolitik*, loftily—and not a little priggishly—allocating blame and praise. He was down in the heat and dirt of the arena, being chivvied round it, not at his own pace, but at Chou-En-Lai's. One is also reminded of the hapless Mr. Bultitude, in *Vice Versa*, who after many years of pontificating about life in an adult and civilized manner, was suddenly transformed outwardly into a twelve-year-old preparatory school boy, and bundled off into the hands of youthful tormentors,

who were quite unimpressed by his sensible, rational, grown-up arguments.

Even while the Ministry of External Affairs in Delhi was busy preparing a White Paper on the two issues of Tibet and the border incidents, which presented India's case with urgency but courtesy, there came news of further Chinese incursions deep into Ladakh, of the seizure of the long-established Indian enclave of Minsar, some 100 miles inside Tibet, of an airfield under construction east of Leh, and of an extensive network of roads both along and inside the borders of Ladakh.

The White Paper duly appeared on September 7; it revealed that there had been some five years in which the controversy had passed to and fro—quite fruitlessly, from the Indian standpoint. The basic Chinese tenets were that any and all blame lay entirely on India's shoulders, that any territory that she claimed as Indian was in fact Chinese, and that any incidents which had occurred had been the result of aggression by Indian troops or police but never of Chinese aggression. As for the McMahon Line, to which Mr. Nehru attached such importance, it was "a product of the British policy of aggression against the Tibet region of China," it had "aroused the great indignation of the Chinese people," and it could not be considered legal.

By an infelicitous but sharply ironic coincidence the Dalai Lama, who was in Delhi pressing his claim for a direct Tibetan appeal to the United Nations, on the very evening on which the White Paper was published, set the Government of India an uncomfortable conundrum over the McMahon Line. In a speech to the Indian Council of World Affairs, he pointed out that the McMahon Line was agreed by the Simla Convention of 1914, which was only binding between Tibet and the then Government of India: if Tibet had no sovereignty when the Simla Convention laid down the McMahon Line, that line was invalid.

"If you deny sovereign status to Tibet," argued the Dalai Lama with impeccable logic, "you deny the validity of the Simla Convention, and therefore you deny the validity of the McMahon Line."

This raking but well-aimed shot from the flank was not the worst of Mr. Nehru's troubles. Within a few days of the publication of the White Paper he faced a ferocious frontal barrage from Chou-En-Lai himself, accompanied by a 2,000-word statement put out by the official Chinese News Agency. On his first reading of Chou-En-Lai's letter, the Indian Prime Minister candidly told Parliament, he was baffled. "I shall have to read it many times," he said, "to try to understand exactly what it may mean. I confess to a growing doubt whether I and the Chinese are speaking the same language in our exchanges. I have been struck by how difficult it is to translate an idea from English into some other language into Chinese or vice-versa."

With a certain bleak humour he speculated on the effects of putting the works of Karl Marx into Chinese, but was entirely in earnest when he observed quietly, "I don't know how the Chinese mind may think. I wonder whether those qualities of calm and logic for which I have admired the Chinese may not have been overwhelmed."

The analogy which rises to my mind this time is, I fear, a little less

lighthearted than the last which I offered. I find myself remembering the stubborn bewilderment of Neville Chamberlain at Godesberg in September, 1938, when he was suddenly confronted by Hitler in a temper, presenting Germany's minimum demands on Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain could hardly believe the evidence of his own senses; did it ever cross his mind, I wonder, that this is where appeasement gets you? And so with Mr. Nehru last year: for, however puzzling Chou-En-Lai's letter, there could not be much mistake about the official statement which accompanied it. This roundly accused India of drawing her maps in such a way as to cut 38,000 square kilometres deep into Chinese territory along the Sinkiang-Tibet-Ladakh border; of invading a number of places claimed to be in China along the Tibet-Punjab-Uttan Pradesh frontier; and of annexing 90,000 square miles of Chinese territory along the Assam-Tibet border.

Forty-eight hours later Mr. Nehru had digested the Chinese Prime Minister's letter. He told the Lokh Sabha that the Chinese claims were "fantastic and absurd," and that they were quite impossible for India or almost any Indian to admit, whatever the consequences.

Politicians are people. It is one of Mr. Nehru's more attractive qualities that he does not hide his ordinary human emotions. The Chinese actions had stung him badly; though he still appealed for calm and reasonableness in meeting the situation, he suddenly showed something of his own anger and pain.

"It is the pride and arrogance of might that is showing," he cried, "in their language, in their behaviour to us, in so many of the things they have done . . . They talk about imperialist pressures against their borders in the past, but they themselves use the arguments of a strong and aggressive Power. Are we perhaps dealing with a case of national paranoia?"

The moment of bitter outspokenness was the moment of illumination, belated but blazing. It was a pity for Mr. Nehru's sake and for India, that the light did not come earlier and stay longer.

"When we first complained about their maps," he went on, "there were bland reassurances from Peking, 'Oh, those are old maps; we'll revise them.' But now what we are faced with is a demand that the Himalayas be handed over as a gift to them. This is an extraordinary claim which cannot be agreed to. There the matter ends."

But the Chinese had no intention of letting it end there. On Tuesday, October 20, an Indian police party encamped at a place called Hot Springs, some 40 miles inside the Ladakh border with China. Two constables sent out on a patrol did not return, and on the following day a search party set out to look for them. This party was surprised by sudden and heavy fire from Chinese troops entrenched on a hill top. The Indians fired back in self-defence, but they were overwhelmed by the Chinese, who greatly outnumbered them, and were using grenades and mortars as well as small arms. Ten Indian policemen were killed, seven were taken prisoner and others wounded.

First reports of this serious and quite large-scale affray reached Delhi later that day, and were quickly followed by a memorandum from the

Chinese Government which turned the facts upside down, accused the Indians of violating the frontier and of opening fire first.

Mr. Nehru made his customary report to Parliament. "The incident," he said, "has caused grave anxiety to India, but I do not say that there will be war with China."

He stressed his and the Government's conviction that the battle took place well within the borders of Ladakh, thus in India and not in China; that remote, barren and windswept as the area was, and guarded by one small checkpost, it had until less than two months earlier not a Chinese in it. Now they were there in considerable force. To this desolate pass all the fine, uplifting talk about peaceful co-existence had been brought.

It was a climactic explosion of violence; from the Chinese point of view, it may have been unintentioned in the sense that they had become contemptuous of India's will or capacity to resist aggression—aggression which, however, they themselves were determined to maintain, and from which they desired to extract every advantage.

Mr. Nehru handled the feeling in his own country with skill, subtlety and patience. As I said, at the beginning, he had been gulled to the full: but not unlike Malvolio he acquired stature by the dignity and the restraint with which he faced his own exposure and grief. After this extreme shock, his hold on Indian public opinion was not diminished; though other countries in free Asia—not to mention some here in Western Europe who had felt the lash of his tongue in his high-and-mighty days—were perhaps not so charitable.

As the fierce Central Asian winter enveloped the greater part of the regions under dispute, the conflict moved over into the sheerly diplomatic sphere. On November 9 Peking published the text of a letter addressed by Chou-En-Lai to Mr. Nehru. It contained a good many flourishes of rather empty courtesy, a side-kick or two at the sinister aims of those who would seek to disrupt by any means the great friendship between India and China, and two concrete propositions: first, that China and India should each withdraw their troops 12½ miles on either side of the disputed border; and second, that he and Mr. Nehru should meet soon to discuss the dispute.

The catch was obvious. Mr. Nehru was no longer so easily deceived. He was sustained by the knowledge that the Soviet Union was undisguisedly anxious about her ally's carryings-on, and that Mr. Khrushchev had described China's behaviour as very old-fashioned. He did not hasten to reply to the Chinese proposals, and when he did, some ten days later, he made two vigorous and practical counter-proposals. He made a clear division between the situation on the North-East Frontier Agency and the situation in Ladakh. It would be sufficient in the eastern sector, he said, for both sides to cease patrolling, but India could not, he pointed out firmly, agree to any arrangement, even as an interim measure, which would leave the Chinese in possession of Longju; the Chinese must evacuate it and the Indians would not reoccupy it. So far as Ladakh was concerned he proposed that Indian forces should withdraw west of the line claimed by the Chinese, and Chinese forces east of the frontier as it had always been understood by India; since the region was almost entirely uninhabited, there was no need for civilian administrators, and they too could be with-

drawn; and since the two lines were separated by considerable distances, there should then be not the slightest risk of border clashes on either side.

A week later, on November 27, there was a three-day debate in the Lokh Sabha on the whole issue. Mr. Nehru was very forthright. He accused China of a "breach of faith" against India, who had from the outset championed her cause.

"The prospect of a future," he said, "in which the two giants of Asia are constantly at each other's throat is bad for the future, bad for China, and bad for India, or for Asia, and a war between them would be a great tragedy . . . People think that in spite of all that has happened on our borders and elsewhere it has made no difference. That is not correct. It has made a tremendous difference not only to the Government's present relations with China but also to what may happen in the future. That is something very obvious from the widespread and deep-seated reaction in India. There is no doubt about that . . . the reaction has been powerful, from children in a primary school to grown-up people. I have ventured sometimes to ask people to be calm. But I might tell you that I was proud of that reaction . . . I ask you all to realize the gravity of the situation created by China. If unfortunately this situation worsens we shall have to become a nation in arms. Let there be no mistake. Every single activity and planning will have to be conditioned by the major fact that it is a struggle for life and death."

In the course of the debate Mr. Nehru extended the guarantee, previously given to Sikkim and Bhutan, to cover Nepal as well. This decision, coupled with the general tone of resolution evident throughout his speech, won Press and public approval throughout India. The Chinese Prime Minister did not reply to Mr. Nehru's letter of November 20 until December 18; he then proposed that the two of them should meet on December 26. This was not acceptable to Mr. Nehru, who reiterated his previous insistence as a precondition to any meeting that Longju and other areas occupied by the Chinese should be evacuated; and added a new stipulation that officials of either side should meet before the two leaders conferred. The exchange of letters thereafter was leisurely, and the letters themselves were lengthy restatements which only served to reveal that there was no common ground between the disputants. But in the middle of February, just before Mr. Krushchev's visit to India, Mr. Nehru invited Mr. Chou-En-Lai to come to Delhi as an honoured guest, and suggested some time in the second half of this month. On February 28 Mr. Chou-En-Lai accepted the invitation with what *The Times* Correspondent in Delhi described as "evident gusto," and said that he would like to make the visit in April.

So far, then, we have come in our unfinished story. We must suppose that this meeting in Delhi next month, if it comes off, will open a new chapter—in a new atmosphere. It is impossible to believe that Sino-Indian friendship will be restored on its old basis. For all Peking's naïve blarneying on this issue, Indian disillusionment is complete. There will be no going back down that hard and humiliating road. The love-affair is over, once and for all. But there are many questions still unanswered.

India's political stand, though belated, has been on the whole firm. She is committed to the defence of her own territory against aggression, and she is also committed to the defence of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan. Has she the military capacity to fulfil these commitments, or are her guarantees about as practicable as that which Britain gave to Poland in April, 1939? Colonel Crocker, whose authority in these matters commands considerable respect, holds* that a large-scale invasion of the Northern States, on the scale which succeeded in Tibet, is unlikely; but—I hope I interpret his argument rightly—that if such an invasion occurred, India would not be able to do very much about it, since neither Mr. Nehru nor the Army Staff have given much thought as to how the guarantees could be made effective.

The prospect, therefore, in front of the Northern States may be pretty bleak. What are the Chinese intentions? I am neither a prophet nor a soothsayer, but I would hazard a grim guess that they do not wish to leave *matters as they are. Do they intend in the short term to bring the border States, at present independent, under their control in the way that the Soviet Union brought the Baltic Republics? And is this, or is it not, the prelude to any long-term plan to subjugate the Indian sub-continent? To what extent do Chinese plans and purposes clash with those of the Soviet Union? Is the Soviet Union either willing or able to restrict China's ambitions? Is it not likely that the two great Communist Powers, however much they may differ on tactical activities, such as this border dispute, are in full agreement on the strategic—one might almost say the teleological—intentions of world Communism?

No issue in all the twelve years since the attainment of independence, a very competent Indian commentator has observed, has made India so angry and so united. Are these emotions enough? Was Mr. Nehru speaking merely rhetorically, or was he envisaging in outline a possible future policy for his country, when he said on November 27 that if the situation worsened, India must become a nation in arms, committed to a struggle for life and death?

These are large and far-reaching questions. They arise inevitably, I submit, out of the dispute whose course I have tried to trace this afternoon. The answers it is neither within my responsibility nor within my capacity to give. So I leave my story unfinished, on a large—and admittedly sombre—note of interrogation.

The CHAIRMAN: The meeting is now open for questions and observations.

Lt.-Colonel E. H. COBB: What importance does the lecturer attach to the recent visit of Koirala, the Prime Minister of Nepal, to Mr. Chou-En-Lai?

Mr. JOHN CONNELL: I tend to use analogies from political experience in Europe. There are, however, other grim analogies. I attach a good deal of importance to that particular visit, and it is not a happy augury.

Mr. BYRT: Why are the Chinese doing all this? So far that question has not been answered. Mr. Connell has suggested that the dispute is due to the politico-psychological differences between India and China, but there

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seems to me to be a much more practical reason. I suggest that it is concerned with their Pacific coast line; that there is no real dispute with India but that the American threat in the east has led the Chinese to feel that they must have a back door. They have already negotiated and come to terms over the Chinese-Burma frontier in a way they would never have done with India or the British Foreign Office. Having fixed transport arrangements with Burma, the Chinese as part of their general plan, are trying to make certain of a back door in India also; they are already importing goods along the new road to Ladakh.

Mr. JOHN CONNELL: It seems rather rough to be both the door and the door-mat and to have 400 million chaps making a door-mat for the back door.

Judge AMEER ALI: There is the overweening conceit of the Chinese nation. I have not in mind individual Chinese, but for 2,500 years the Chinese have had an overwhelming superiority complex over the rest of Asia. Even now the Communist Chinese (as in the past Imperial and Republican Chinese), are never so happy as when "coming it" over another Asiatic or European, if possible.

Mr. G. W. PYKE: The lecturer several times mentioned 1938 and 1939. I understand that the real reason why the Germans and the Russians during those years fell out and failed to agree, lay in the fact that they could not decide who was to have Suez and the Persian Gulf. It has occurred to me that perhaps we are already again in 1940 and that probably the position has been already agreed upon by the Chinese and the Russians, and that India, and parts east and south-east thereof go to China and the Russians will have the rest, including Africa, the Middle East and Pakistan. In other words, the future position in that part of the world has already been decided?

Mr. JOHN CONNELL: I accept that proposition.

The CHAIRMAN: We have passed the time allotted to us, but before we leave I feel sure you would like to join in thanking Mr. John Connell for the fascinating lecture he has given us. It must have meant a serious piece of work to compose and deliver in a short time a documentary talk on a subject so immense. Mr. Connell can feel that the result of his work has given satisfaction to those present and that we have all listened with intense interest to what he has told us. You will, I am sure, wish to express your thanks in the usual way. (*Applause.*)

