

**P. C. Chakravarti**

**INDIA'S CHINA POLICY**



**INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS**

*Bloomington 1962*

## chapter 7

### CHINESE INTRUSIONS AND CLAIMS

THE TRAGEDY of Tibet cast a deep shadow upon Sino-Indian relations. It undermined India's faith in Chinese *bona fides*. On the other hand, it infuriated the Chinese against the people and government of India. For Prime Minister Nehru it was at once a shock and a disillusionment. He saw the fabric of Sino-Indian friendship, which he had sought all these years to build up with such infinite care and patience, crumbling to pieces. He saw one of the major planks of his foreign policy collapsing before his eyes. Inevitably he was perturbed. "It is a deeper tragedy for many of us," he said with profound regret, "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."<sup>1</sup> But he decided to salvage what he could from the wreck.

For the Tibetans he had profound and limitless sympathy. But he would not allow that sympathy to come in the way of his friendship with China. He still seems to have believed that the Chinese would see the error of their ways and seek to

bring about a rapprochement with the Dalai Lama on the basis of Tibetan autonomy. "I cannot imagine any feasible, practical or happy solution without the autonomy of the Tibetan people," he said at Madras on April 14. "We accept Chinese overlordship, but I do earnestly hope that the Tibetan people will maintain and be able to enjoy their autonomy and not be oppressed and suppressed by others and that sooner or later some such settlement will be arrived at."<sup>2</sup> In his view, guarded expression of opinions and sympathies in India would not only pave the path for such a settlement but would go a long way toward restoring India's friendship with China. On April 6 he declared at Allahabad that although India had full sympathy with the Tibetans, she must not take any action which would "in any way affect the 2,000-year-old friendship between India and China." On April 10, addressing the Parliamentary Consultative Committee on Foreign Affairs, he stressed the vital need of preventing the cold war atmosphere from pervading India in the wake of the happenings in Tibet. On April 24 he reiterated at Mussoorie that India's interest in Tibet was "historical, sentimental and religious, and not essentially political." On May 9 he urged the Congress Working Committee to observe restraint whenever they spoke on Tibet and "expressed his keen desire to maintain friendly relations with China." The Working Committee accordingly adopted a resolution expressing its anxiety "that there should be friendly relations with China." Nehru also discouraged the expression of organized public sympathy for Tibet; and when a Tibet Convention was planned in Calcutta, he indirectly asked members of the Congress Party not to associate themselves with it.

The Dalai Lama had been granted political asylum in India, but he was informed that he was not expected "to function on the political plane," and in making statements he should see to it that India's relations with China were not compromised. In a news conference at Mussoorie (June 20, 1959), the Dalai Lama had stated: "Wherever I am, accompanied by my Gov-

ernment, the Tibetan people recognised us as the Government by law." Immediately the Government of India came out with a counterblast, repudiating the claim of the Dalai Lama and refusing him the status of an *émigré* government. "The Government of India want to make it clear," the statement ran, "that they do not recognise any separate government of Tibet and there is, therefore, no question of a Tibetan government under the Dalai Lama functioning in India".<sup>3</sup> Restrictions were also imposed on foreign journalists in the matter of communicating with Tibetan refugees except through official interpreters, in the belief that critical or derogatory statements regarding Chinese rule in Tibet emanating from northern India might further strain India-China relations. New Delhi, moreover, made it known early in July, 1959, that despite all that had happened in Tibet and Peking's general cynical attitude toward international obligations, India would repeat her initiative of the last two years toward replacing Formosa by Peking in the China seat in the Security Council. Desperately Nehru followed a course of restraint and caution, apparently hoping that it would evoke some sort of sympathetic response in Peking's Red oligarchy.

The Red oligarchy, however, was in a different mood. True, there was a temporary abatement of the orgy of anti-Indian vituperation in China. But the taps shut in Peking were opened with almost equal vehemence in Lhasa. Here the Chinese launched upon an insidious, anti-Indian propaganda through Tibetan-language newspapers, broadsheets, and bulletins, telling the Tibetans that Indians were exploiters who had inherited all the traditions of British imperialism. In the Goebellian style false stories were manufactured and circulated regarding the "evil deeds" of Indian physicians and of the former Indian military escort in Tibet before they were eliminated by the agreement of 1954.<sup>4</sup> At the same time the Chinese officers in Tibet went about proclaiming that they would before long "liberate" Sikkim, Bhutan, Ladakh, and NEFA, which were

being wrongfully held by the "Indian imperialists."<sup>5</sup> Vital border areas were similarly saturated with propaganda and people were told that if Tibet was the palm of China's hand, Bhutan, NEFA, Sikkim, Nepal, and Ladakh were its fingers. Presumably now that the palm was restored to China, the fingers must go with it.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, without openly repudiating the agreement of 1954, Peking now began to put serious obstacles in the way of the functioning of Indian consulates and trade posts and of Indian pilgrims and traders in Tibet, presumably with a view to wiping out the last traces of Indian connection with that country. The Indian Trade Agency buildings at Gyantse had been washed away by floods. After prolonged negotiations, it had been decided to begin the construction of a new building in May, 1959. Peking was, therefore, requested "that the local authorities may be instructed to give help in procuring timber, stones and bricks and in making available the necessary transport for construction work." But the local authorities, instead of extending cooperation, created "all manner of difficulties" in the way of construction. Laborers were ordered "under threat of arrest" to stop working on the site. Owners of horse carts were instructed not to lift bricks to the Trade Agency site. Dealers who supplied *arca* (mortar) were prohibited from making deliveries to the Agency.<sup>7</sup> Similar obstacles were created in the way of maintenance and repairs of other Trade Agencies. Moreover, Indian officials in the consulate-general at Lhasa and other centers were closely watched and subjected to various disabilities in the pursuit of their normal official functions. So were Indian traders and pilgrims. They were not permitted to visit even recognised marts at Phari and Gyantse, much less Shigatse and Lhasa. They could not travel freely nor could they get transport to send their goods from one place to another. Finally, to completely paralyze Indian traders, the currency regulations of Tibet were suddenly changed (July, 1959), making the use of Indian currency illegal and fixing the

exchange value of Tibetan currency at 25 per cent of its previous value. Indian traders found their stocks depreciated by 75 per cent overnight. On August 6, 1959, Prime Minister Nehru told the Indian Parliament that India's trade with Tibet had undergone a sharp decline. In February India's import trade with Tibet amounted to Rs. 1,500,000 and export to Rs. 1,000,000. By June the figures came down to Rs. 200,000 and Rs. 300,000 respectively.

Alongside these anti-Indian maneuvers, Peking now kicked up a row over another issue. Several hundred Ladakhis, lamas and Muslims, had been resident in Tibet for years either for trade or for study. Some had been there for two or three generations. But they did not hold any travel papers or identity certificates. The fact was that they came into Tibet when travel between Ladakh and Tibet was free, and until the abolition of the Local Government of Tibet by the Chinese in the wake of the disturbances of March-April, 1959, local regulations did not require them to register as Indian nationals or hold official identity certificates. With the Chinese now in complete control of Tibet, they became anxious to register themselves as Indian nationals or alternatively return home. But the Chinese, who claimed them as Chinese nationals, did not permit them to do either. They were even prevented from making contact with the Indian Consul-General at Lhasa for purposes of either consultation or registration. Off and on they were also threatened with dire punishment unless they denounced their claim to Indian nationality and accepted Chinese citizenship. The government of India made repeated representations to Peking on these and other matters, but without much avail.<sup>8</sup>

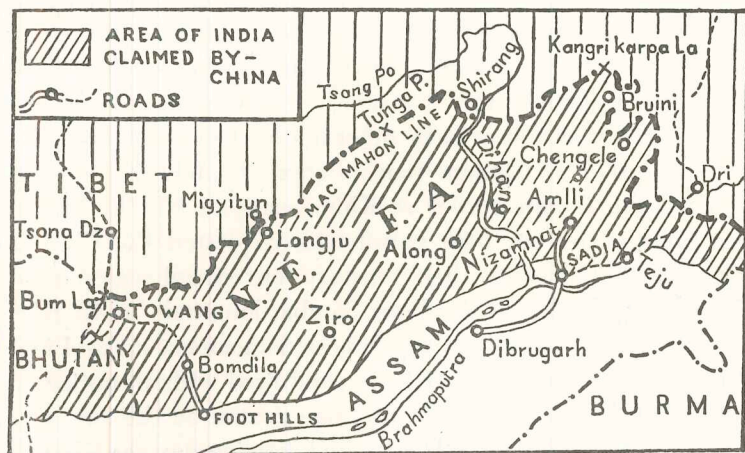
Side by side with these efforts to tighten the screws on Tibet, the Chinese now began a new series of intrusions across India's traditional northern frontier. On July 30, 1959, the government of India received information regarding the presence of a Chinese armed detachment in Indian territory in the region of Western Pangong Lake in Ladakh and of the establishment of

a Chinese camp at Spanggur, both these places lying well within the Indian frontier. News was also received that an Indian police party of six men on reconnaissance duty within the Indian frontier was arrested and taken into custody by the Chinese. The Indian government immediately lodged a strong protest to Peking against the violation of the Indian border and the arrest of the Indian police party "engaged in bonafide duties within Indian territory." Peking, however, instead of answering the Indian protest, brought forward countercharges against India, alleging that Indian armed personnel had intruded into Chinese territory, and as they did not withdraw in spite of "friendly warning," there was no alternative but to disarm and detain them.<sup>9</sup>

This was soon followed by other and more violent intrusion. On August 7 a Chinese patrol, approximately 200 strong, crossed the Indian border at Khinzemare in NEFA. "When encountered by our own patrol who requested the Chinese patrol to withdraw to their territory, our patrol was pushed back to the bridge at Drokung Samba, longitude 91.47' n."<sup>10</sup> On August 25 another strong Chinese detachment crossed into Indian territory south of Migyitun and fired without notice on an Indian forward picket, killing one person on the spot and seriously wounding another. On the following day the Chinese detachment outflanked the Indian post at Longju, overwhelmed the small Indian force of eighteen men of the Assam Rifles and compelled them to withdraw. When the government of India made a strong protest against this unprovoked firing on a static post within Indian territory, Peking replied: "Longju is indisputably part of Chinese territory," the Indian personnel who were there were guilty of violating Chinese territorial integrity, it was they who had opened fire and the Chinese acted only in self-defense. The Chinese reply added: "no section of Sino-Indian boundary has been formally delimited: . . . the so-called MacMahon Line was set forth in the past by the British imperialists unilaterally and has never been accepted by the

Chinese Government; it of course cannot be regarded as legal." The note closed with a somber warning: "No violation of Chinese territory will be tolerated. All areas that have been invaded and occupied must be evacuated. Any armed provocation will certainly meet with Chinese frontier guards' firm rebuff."<sup>11</sup>

If Tibet had, in some measure, shaken Nehru's faith in China, Longju for the first time made him apprehensive about Chinese intentions toward India. In his desperate longing to main-



Eastern sector of the India-China frontier.

tain friendship with China, he had for years borne Chinese intrusions and insults without letting the Parliament or the country know anything about them. As he himself says in one of his letters to Chou En-lai: "We did not release to the public the information which we had about various border intrusions into our territory by Chinese personnel since 1954, the construction of the road across Indian territory in Ladakh, and the arrest of our personnel in the Aksai Chin area in 1958 and their detention. We did not give publicity to this in the hope that peaceful solutions of the disputes could be found by agreement

between the two countries without public excitement on both sides".<sup>12</sup>

After Longju, it was no longer possible or desirable to keep back the facts about Chinese aggression from the Parliament or people of India. On August 28, 1959, in reply to a series of questions and adjournment motions in the Lok Sabha, Nehru revealed that the Chinese had been continually violating Indian territorial integrity and these intrusions had occurred in places as far apart as Ladakh in the northwest and NEFA in the extreme northeast. He gave a complete account of the Longju incident and announced that the entire NEFA border, which had hitherto been guarded by the Assam Rifles and the militia, would henceforth be placed under army control. He also reaffirmed his earlier policy statement that any aggression against Bhutan and Sikkim would be considered as aggression against India. "While I do not wish to take an alarmist view of the situation," he said, "we should naturally be prepared for any eventuality and without fuss or shouting keep vigilant."<sup>13</sup>

Three days later (August 31), speaking to the Rajya Sabha, Nehru gave a more concrete account of the policy which his government would follow in dealing with Chinese incursions. It would be a "double policy," he said. The government would strengthen border defenses and repulse further incursions and at the same time hold themselves in readiness to "settle matters by conference."<sup>14</sup> In other words, he would not lead the country to war in order to recover the areas which had been forcibly occupied by the Chinese. For this he would employ the methods of negotiation. Any fresh incursion, however, would be repulsed with force.

But there was a logic behind Chinese intrusions, and a part of it was soon revealed. On September 8, 1959, Chou En-lai sent a long note to Nehru, stating that China refused to recognize India's northern frontier and laying claim to about 50,000 square miles of Indian territory. He contended that the Sino-Indian boundary had never been formally delimited; that

1959

the central government of China did not send anybody to participate in the conclusion of the treaty of 1842, which delimited the Ladakh-Tibet frontier, and therefore the treaty was not valid; that the section of the boundary consisting of the area of Sang and Tsungha, southwest of Tsaparang Dzong in Tibet, was "30 to 40 years back gradually invaded and occupied by the British" and, therefore, "an outstanding issue left over by history;" and that the "so-called MacMahon Line was a product of British policy of aggression against the Tibet Region of China," and therefore "an illegal line." Chou En-lai added that if China had not yet fully crossed the line and taken possession of territories which she claimed, it was only "to facilitate negotiations." This, the Chinese Prime Minister emphasized, in no way implied that China recognized the traditional frontier.<sup>16</sup>

At long last Chou En-lai came out with what possibly had been in his mind all these years. From 1954 to 1959 he had been pretending that the inflated Chinese maps were mere reproductions of old maps, produced by that "bandit" Chiang Kai-shek, and they were still current because the new regime had had no time to revise them. When Nehru had raised the question of these maps at Peking in 1954 and again at New Delhi in 1956-57, he was solemnly assured that although the Chinese government disliked the use of the phrase "MacMahon Line," they did not entertain any intention to dispute it. But now in September, 1959, Chou En-lai claimed all those Indian territories shown in "bandit" maps as Chinese.

True, this was not the first occasion Chou En-lai gave an inkling of his mind to Nehru. In a letter dated January 23, 1959, he had told the Indian Prime Minister that "there are certain differences between the two sides over the border question," and these related to both Ladakh and NEFA. Lest Nehru might wonder why this question should be raised after so many years of tacit acceptance, Chou En-lai pointedly stated that he had not raised it earlier, "because the conditions were not ripe for

settlement."<sup>16</sup> Conditions were indeed not ripe! Motorable roads connecting China with Tibet and then on to the Indian frontier had not yet been built, airfields had not yet been constructed, colonization of Tibet by Chinese immigrants had not yet gone far enough, and, finally, the backbone of the Tibetan nation had not yet been completely broken. In other words, the Chinese deemed it expedient to refrain from raising the question of the frontier until they had consolidated their hold over Tibet and transformed it into an effective base of operations. By September, 1959, such transformation was well under way, and Chou En-lai could now reveal without hesitation some of the ambitions which had been revolving in his mind during the past decade.

Communists and fellow travelers in India were thrilled by the prospect of approaching "liberation." But Nehru was stupefied. In his letter to Chou En-lai, dated September 26, he wrote:

I must frankly say that your letter of the 8th September has come as a great shock to us. India was one of the first countries to extend recognition to the People's Republic of China, and for the last ten years we have consistently sought to maintain and strengthen our friendship with your country. When our two countries signed the 1954 Agreement in regard to the Tibet region, I hoped that the main problems which history had bequeathed to us had been peacefully and finally settled. Five years later, you have now brought forward, with all insistence, a problem which dwarfs in importance all that we had discussed in recent years and, I thought, settled.<sup>17</sup>

In this letter, which in many ways is of historic importance, Nehru maintained that the boundaries of India were settled for centuries "by history, geography, custom and tradition," and he produced a vast array of historical and factual data in support of his statement.<sup>18</sup>

Discussing Chou En-lai's letter in the Parliament, Nehru said that it had created a situation of "serious concern" to India. The Chinese demanded "the Himalayas being handed over as

a gift. This was an extra-ordinary claim; and whether India existed or not, this could not be done." He compared the Chinese attitude with that of those aggressive, imperialist powers of the West, who not long ago regarded themselves as leaders of the world and expected the rest to follow them. "What is happening in China today is the pride and arrogance of might that is showing in their language and in their behaviour to us and in so many other things they have done." "What we have to face today," he said in another context, "is a great and powerful nation, which is aggressive. It might be aggressive minus communism or plus communism. Either way it is there." Nehru now realized that his assessment of China, on which India's China policy was based, was wrong. In a depressing tone he confessed to the Parliament that "the Chinese had valued India's friendship only to a very low extent in the final analysis." With disarming frankness, he told his critics: "I did not know that China would behave like this."<sup>19</sup>

Regarding the policy to be pursued in the face of Chinese threats and claims, he told Parliament that while the MacMahon line was India's frontier, he would be prepared for minor adjustments here and there. "A particular place one mile this side or that side of the MacMahon line was a small matter." The broad principle was the watershed. "I stick to that broad approach. But if a slight deviation by evidence or facts in alignment is necessary, it is not a major matter. That has to be decided by facts, not by anybody's coercion."<sup>20</sup> To Chou En-lai he wrote to the same effect, saying that while the government of India could not discuss with China the future of large areas of Indian territory which China claimed, they would be prepared to discuss minor adjustments here and there. "No discussions," however, "can be fruitful unless the posts on the traditional side of the Indian frontier now held by the Chinese forces are first evacuated by them and further threats and intimidations immediately cease."<sup>21</sup>

In the meanwhile, another outburst of anti-Indian vituperation

was let loose in China. Hastily a meeting of the Standing Committee of the Chinese National People's Congress was summoned, and every member spoke in support of the claims put forward by Chou En-lai and expressed "great surprise at Mr. Nehru defending British imperialism." This support of "the aggressive plot of British imperialism," said Chou En-lai, did not "accord with the Five Principles advocated by Nehru." The Chinese press again raised a hue and cry that the Indian "reactionaries" were using the Dalai Lama as "a tool against China."<sup>22</sup>

At Lhasa General Chang Kuo-hua declared that there was no question of vacating the areas China had occupied.<sup>23</sup>

At the same time the Chinese intensified their activities in Tibet, along the frontier, and even inside India. With feverish haste jeepable roads were built to the main passes along the MacMahon Line, and existing pony and mule tracks were improved. New airstrips on the other side of the line were constructed, and air reconnaissance was intensified all along the frontier.<sup>24</sup> Within India, against all canons of approved international practice, the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi began to publish and circulate bulletins criticizing Nehru's statements and the Indian government's policies, reproducing the texts of speeches made in the Standing Committee of the National Peoples' Congress and reprinting anti-Indian articles published in the *People's Daily* of Peking. At the same time, the Chinese Trade Agency in Kalimpong commenced disseminating propaganda material, either directly or through the agency of their Indian sympathizers in the vital border areas of Sikkim and Bhutan.<sup>25</sup> And, to cap the climax as it were, the Indian Communist Party intensified its pro-China activity. Pro-Chinese demonstrations were held in Calcutta and other places, and the Party's so-called "intellectuals" told the country and their youthful followers that the Chinese were perfectly right when they stated that the border between India and China had never been delineated, that "Socialist China can never commit an act

of aggression," and that "the much publicised intrusion on the Indian border is nothing but a bogey raised by newspapers and a deep-rooted conspiracy by Western imperialists and vested interests."<sup>26</sup>

And then for a brief spell the clouds seemed to lift. The Indian Ambassador at Peking, who hitherto had been deliberately kept at a distance and whose requests to see the Chinese Foreign Minister were repeatedly turned down under one pretext or another, suddenly became an object of extreme friendliness on the part of the Chinese authorities. At Lhasa the guards in front of the Indian Consulate-General were removed and Indian officials were allowed to move about with comparative freedom. On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Chinese People's Republic Nehru sent a message of congratulations and good wishes to the Chinese Prime Minister. In reply Chou En-lai sent to the Indian Prime Minister a telegram, couched in the warmest language, applauding the principles of coexistence and describing the current differences between India and China as "only an episode" in a story of "age-old friendship." Mr. Ajoy Ghosh, Secretary of the Indian Communist Party, on his return from Peking and Moscow, testified to the unalloyed friendship of the Chinese for India and their anxiety to work for a peaceful settlement of the border dispute. Some other foreign visitors to Peking came back with the same impressions. Dr. Subandrio, the Indonesian Foreign Minister, stated that "he was sure" the Chinese government wanted to settle border issues with India "peacefully as soon as possible." Dr. Tulsi Giri, Nepal's Development Minister, also made a statement of identical content, adding that his country was willing to offer its good offices to help forward a settlement.<sup>27</sup>

New Delhi was elated. It began almost to expect that China would recant and make some dramatic gesture of good will. Nehru waved aside the suggestion of a defense pact with Pakistan, though negotiations on other matters which began at that time engendered an atmosphere of unprecedented friendliness.

Everything was done to play down the conflict. Nehru declared that he did not believe there was any considered policy behind Chinese action. In the United Nations the leader of the Indian delegation, Mr. Krishna Menon, once more spoke with some vehemence for the admission of Communist China to the China seat in the Security Council and opposed the inclusion of the Tibet question in the General Assembly's agenda, stating, as was stated in 1950, that his government believed that "the plight of the Tibetan people would be resolved by processes of peaceful reconciliation."<sup>28</sup>

But this renewed attempt at reconciliation was cut short by another severe blow. On October 21, 1959, New Delhi got the staggering news that an Indian police party on routine patrol duty near Kongka Pass in the Chang Chemmo valley in Ladakh had been ambushed and fired upon by Chinese troops. The circumstances leading to this tragedy and its aftermath were soon revealed. On October 20, two Indian policemen and a porter went out on patrol duty in the Kongka Pass in Ladakh. When they failed to return in the evening, a party was sent out in search of the missing persons, but the search proved unavailing. On the following morning, therefore, another party under the direction of a senior officer named Karam Singh went out to continue the search. After they had gone about five miles to the east of the Hot Springs they saw the hoofprints of some horses obviously belonging to the Chinese. Following these marks for six or seven hundred yards, they noticed on their left "a Chinese soldier on the hill shouting something and waving his hands upwards as if he was asking us to raise our hands and surrender." Karam Singh shouted back at the top of his voice "that it was our area." Immediately there was a volley of fire both from the front and from the hilltop. The Indian personnel fired back in self-defense, but were overwhelmed by the strategic situation and the superior strength and fire power of the Chinese troops. Whereas the Indian policemen had nothing but rifles with them, the Chinese were provided with rifles,

mortars and hand grenades. Nine Indians were killed, one was seriously injured, and others surrendered.

The area where the incident took place is mountainous and uninhabited and about forty to fifty miles west of the traditional Sino-Indian frontier as shown in Indian official maps. It was the practice of Indian frontier guards to proceed to the area once a year to carry out normal patrol duty. But in the months following the patrolling of June, 1958, the Chinese had edged forward from their military base at Rudok and planted their outpost in this neighborhood.

After their surrender the Indian policemen, living, wounded, and dead, were taken by the Chinese to their outpost. One wounded policeman was left on the way and was later unaccounted for. The prisoners were kept in torn tents in bitterly cold weather and without any bedding for five days. In consequence of this, the leader of the party, Karam Singh, and three constables were severely frost-bitten. One of the prisoners who had a bullet wound received no medical attention until the fourth day. Besides, the prisoners were subjected to continuous interrogation from the time of their arrest till the time of their release. They were asked under threats and pressure to make statements to the effect that the Indian party had gone forward knowingly into Chinese territory, that they were the aggressors and that they had sent two constables and a porter on the previous day for purposes of espionage.

In the exchange of notes between the two governments, following the tragedy, Peking complained that "Indian troops" had "unlawfully intruded into Chinese territory" and "opened heavy fire on Chinese frontier guards and launched armed attack." "Under these conditions," the Chinese note of October 22 said, "the Chinese frontier guards were compelled to fire back in self-defence."

In its note of October 23, the government of India repudiated the Chinese allegations, affirmed that the area where the incident occurred was far within the traditional Indian frontier,

and maintained that the attack was launched by the Chinese. The note added:

The Government of India reserve the right to claim adequate compensation from the Chinese Government when the precise extent of the loss is known. The Chinese authorities have no right to arrest or detain Indian personnel who should immediately be released. Further, the Government of India ask the Chinese authorities to withdraw their forces from this area and to prevent their illegal entry into Indian territory and interference with Indian personnel.

The Chinese government in their turn repudiated the statements and demands of the Indian government. Their note of October 25 said:

. . . the Chinese Government absolutely cannot agree to the allegation of the Indian Government that Chinese troops intruded into Indian Territory and attacked the Indian troops. . . . The Indian side must be held fully responsible for the incident. . . . The place where the Indian troops launched armed provocation is indisputably Chinese territory. . . . Any violation of China's territory is absolutely impermissible and any armed provocation must be firmly rebuffed.

The note also rejected India's claim to any kind of compensation but intimated China's willingness to release the captured Indian policemen and hand over to Indian authorities the dead bodies of those who were killed.

The government of India in its memorandum of November 4 put forward a mass of evidence to prove that the area under dispute really belonged to India. "It is true that the Government of India did not open any border outposts right along the traditional frontier. This was because the area was inhabited very sparsely, if at all, and they had no reason to suspect any aggressive intention on the part of the Chinese Government. They were, therefore, content with sending regular patrol parties to these areas in previous years." In this and a subsequent

note the Indian government also placed on record its emphatic protest "against the deplorable treatment to which the Indian personnel were subjected while in the custody of the Chinese soldiers. This treatment which the Indian personnel received was much worse than that to which even prisoners of war are entitled under the Geneva convention of August, 1949."

On November 14, 1959, the birthday of Prime Minister Nehru, the Chinese handed over the dead bodies and released the Indian prisoners.<sup>29</sup>

### chapter 8

#### DELHI SUMMIT

THE KONGKA PASS incident brought India-China relations almost to a breaking point. Indian public opinion was so inflamed that there was a demand from certain quarters that diplomatic relations with Peking be forthwith broken off and that the aggressors be ousted from Indian soil, if necessary by force. Even the Indian policy of non-alignment, which had hitherto received the almost unanimous support of the Indian people, now came in for criticism and even men of the stature of Shri C. Rajagopalachari pleaded for an open alignment with the West. For a moment Nehru's own position seemed to be tottering. For the first time since independence, his replacement was openly suggested by some normally loyal and responsible newspapers. "Let us warn him," said a leading English daily of New Delhi, "that he may not have many more opportunities to unite the country behind him, if China is allowed to go on heaping contumely and humiliation on us."

The Indian government, although not in favor of immediate