

The Himalayan Border Crisis. - Chinese Offensive in Ladakh and North-East Frontier Agency. - 100-Mile Chinese Advance in N.E.F.A. - Unilateral Cease-Fire by Chinese Forces.

The long-standing tension between India and China over the demarcation of the Himalayan frontier between the two countries came to a head on Oct. 20, 1962, with a massive Chinese offensive both in the Ladakh area of north-east Kashmir (claimed by China as part of Sinkiang province) and across the McMahon Line in the North-East Frontier Agency (N.E.F.A.). Whereas in Ladakh the Chinese did not advance beyond the areas claimed by them as part of Chinese territory, at the eastern end of the Himalayan border powerful Chinese forces made a 100-mile advance into the N.E.F.A. which brought them almost to the plains of Assam before hostilities ceased on Nov. 21, when the Chinese announced a unilateral cease-fire and the withdrawal of their troops to positions "12 miles beyond the line of actual control which existed between India and China on Nov. 7, 1959." The Chinese statement, by implication, appeared to suggest that the Chinese were prepared to withdraw to the McMahon Line at the eastern end of the Himalayan frontier, while continuing to hold their gains in Ladakh at the western end.

Heavy casualties were suffered by both sides during the month's fighting (Oct. 20 to Nov. 21), in which the Indian Army put up a gallant resistance to Chinese forces which enjoyed great numerical superiority in addition to important geographical and logistical advantages arising from the nature of the terrain. Fighting was particularly severe in the N.E.F.A., where the Chinese, regardless of heavy losses, threw masses of infantry into the attack with powerful artillery support. The outnumbered Indian defenders, though inflicting much heavier casualties than they themselves suffered, were obliged to fall back from both ends of the McMahon Line, suffering a particularly serious reverse by the loss of Bomdila, an important administrative centre in the N.E.F.A. Following the fall of Bomdila, the Chinese advanced to within striking-distance of the Assam plains, as stated, before suddenly halting their offensive and announcing a cease-fire.

The various stages of the Himalayan border crisis are summarized below under cross-headings, covering developments in the months prior to the outbreak of large-scale hostilities, and the military operations during the period of heavy fighting lasting from Oct. 20 to Nov. 21.

The voluminous exchange of Notes between India and China on the Himalayan border dispute—a correspondence unparalleled in diplomatic history—continued unabated throughout 1962, in continuance of the correspondence which had gone on during 1961, 1960, 1959, and earlier years [see 18079 A, 17784 A, 17115 A]. All these Notes were, in essence, a repetition of the standpoints of the two Governments as previously defined in the earlier correspondence, namely, Indian charges of Chinese incursions both in Ladakh and the N.E.F.A.; Chinese denials of these

charges, coupled with counter-allegations that the Indians were themselves responsible for border violations and intrusions on what was claimed to be Chinese territory; mutual accusations of overflights by Chinese and Indian planes; and reaffirmations by both Governments of their desire for a peaceful settlement of the border dispute. In all, some 400 Notes had been exchanged between India and China at the time of the Chinese offensive in October 1962, the correspondence continuing during and after the hostilities on the Himalayan frontier.

An Indian White Paper of Nov. 28, 1961, contained the text of 108 Notes exchanged by the two countries on the border dispute during 1961. Presenting the White Paper to the *Lok Sabha*, Mr. Nehru said that the Note exchanges disclosed that the Chinese had set up three new posts in the Ladakh area, one of which was 12 miles further inside Indian territory than the deepest hitherto established; describing these border violations as “intolerable,” he declared that “the Chinese are guilty of further aggressions against India and their protestations to the contrary are only a cloak to cover up aggressive activities.”

A further Indian White Paper of March 16, 1962, giving the text of many more Notes exchanged during the previous four months, contained further numerous allegations and counter-allegations by either side of border violations, as well as of alleged violations of Indian and Chinese airspace. In the latest Indian Note to Peking (dated March 13) the Government of India had made it clear that the “first essential condition” for negotiations on the border dispute must be the withdrawal by the Chinese from all Indian territory occupied since 1957, and the restoration of the *status quo* as it existed in that year. China, on the other hand, had accused India of constant “nibbling at Chinese territory by unilateral action,” thereby creating “an increasingly tense situation along the border.”

The text of 12 further Notes, published in New Delhi on April 30, 1962, showed that India had continued to reaffirm her previously expressed standpoint—namely, that while always willing to negotiate, she could not enter into any negotiations as long as Chinese forces remained on Indian territory. The Chinese People's Republic was therefore called upon to withdraw its forces from Indian soil and thus create “the essential conditions for peaceful negotiations” on the border dispute in the spirit of *Panch Sila* (the “five principles of peaceful co-existence”). China, on the other hand, had continued to deny the Indian charges *in toto* and had accused India of “repeated intrusions into the Sinkiang-Uighur autonomous region of China” [i.e. the Aksai Chin area of Ladakh, claimed by China as part of Sinkiang and by India as part of Kashmir] and of “strengthening its military dispositions in this area in recent months.”

In a statement to the *Lok Sabha* on May 14, Mr. Nehru proposed that a “no-man’s-land” be created in Ladakh whereby each side should withdraw to what the other country regarded as its boundary; such an arrangement, he suggested, might form a basis for a resumption of Sino-Indian negotiations, and in the meantime the Chinese could continue to use the road they had built across the tip of the Aksai Chin plateau [see map; page 19124]. On June 19, however, the text of 16 further Notes was published in New Delhi (covering the period May 10 to June 6) showing that India had strongly protested to Peking at further recent Chinese encroachments in Ladakh, involving the setting up of five new Chinese bases in the Chip Chap Valley and elsewhere.

During the first ten days of July 1962—by which time India and China had exchanged 378 Notes on the border dispute—the situation in Ladakh deteriorated with a Chinese infiltration into the lower reaches of the Galwan River valley. A New Delhi announcement of July 10 stated that an Indian post in this area had been surrounded on three sides by some 400 Chinese troops who had taken up positions within 50 yards of the Indian outposts; it was pointed out that the scene of the incident was 10 miles beyond the line claimed by China as her frontier in Ladakh, constituting the deepest Chinese penetration in this area. In response to a strong Indian protest sent on July 8, China replied on July 10 by a Note denying the Indian charges and accusing India herself of “setting up four new military strongpoints in Sinkiang province as a smokescreen for an armed invasion”—an allegation described by the Indian External Affairs Ministry as “a tissue of lies.”

An Indian counter-Note (July 12) reiterated that the Chinese forces on the Galwan River were “not only poised in menacing proximity to existing Indian posts in the area” but that “their incessant provocative activities... may create a clash at any moment.” Giving the locations of seven new Chinese posts established south of the Karakoram Pass, the Note described the Chinese as “pushing forward in trucks and jeeps, blasting the mountain sides with heavy explosives, constructing military bases, and extending the military bases already set up.”

Although the tension was momentarily eased by a slight Chinese withdrawal in the Galwan Valley, two further incidents occurred on July 21 when Indian forces came under fire from the Chinese at two widely separated points in Ladakh—in the Chip Chap River valley at a point 15 miles south of the Karakoram Pass, and near Pangong Lake more than 100 miles to the south-east. In the latter area Chinese troops fired on an Indian patrol, which suffered no casualties and did not return the fire, while in the Chip Chap valley two Indian soldiers were wounded—the first clash between Indian and Chinese forces in Ladakh since the Chang Chemo valley incident in October 1959 [see page 17120].

A further White Paper (the sixth of its kind) was issued by the Indian Government on Aug. 6, 1962, giving the text of more Notes exchanged by India and China since mid-July. Apart from mutual disclaimers of responsibility for the Ladakh incidents, and allegations that responsibility lay with the other side, the correspondence revealed: (1) that China had accepted an Indian suggestion for discussions on the boundary question on the basis of the joint report of officials of the two Governments presented in 1960 [see 18079]; (2) that, on the other hand, China had categorically rejected India's proposal for mutual troop withdrawals in Ladakh so as to create a “no-man's-land,” on the ground that such a withdrawal would “require the Chinese Government to make a one-sided withdrawal from large tracts of its own territory, which of course the Chinese Government cannot consider”; (3) that China had insisted that there could be no pre-conditions for negotiations, in which connexion the latest Chinese Note (Aug. 4) had declared that “the way to ease tension is not for the Chinese side to withdraw within its own territory but for the Indian side to withdraw its troops and strongpoints from Chinese territory, stop further encroachments, and desist from armed provocations.”

In reply to the Chinese Note of Aug. 4, an Indian Note of Aug. 22 emphasized that “discussions cannot start unless the *status quo* on the boundary in this region [Ladakh], which has been altered by force since 1957, is restored and current tensions are removed.” At the same time India offered to receive a Chinese representative to discuss “essential preliminary measures” for

the settlement of the border dispute, while insisting that “there can be no pre-judgment of Chinese claims before discussions start.”

A Chinese Note of Sept. 13 proposed (1) that the two Governments should appoint representatives to start discussions on Oct. 15, alternately in Peking and Delhi as agreed through diplomatic channels; and (2) that “the armed forces of both sides withdraw 20 kilometres along the entire border in order to ease tension.” The Note, which was couched in strong terms, charged India with “pursuing a dual policy of sham negotiations and actual fighting”; alleged that the Indian Government “has no desire to solve the boundary question peacefully through negotiations but is using peaceful pretensions as a cover for its plan of nibbling into Chinese territory and altering the *status quo* on the frontier”; and characterized India's demand for the restoration of the *status quo* of 1957 as “utterly absurd,” asserting in this connexion that India herself had committed aggression against China during the past five years.

The Indian reply (dated Sept. 19) rejected the Chinese proposal for a 20-kilometre withdrawal along the entire frontier, stating: “This proposal suffers from the serious defect that it leaves the aggressor who altered the *status quo* by unilateral action over the last few years in possession of the fruits of his aggression. [the first time that the Government of India had categorically described China as an “aggressor”] This could hardly create the climate of confidence... which is an essential pre-requisite for fruitful discussions to resolve the differences between the two Governments on the boundary question.... No amount of casuistry or threats of force will deter India from her resolve to maintain her territorial integrity intact.” The Government of India nevertheless reiterated its willingness to hold discussions at appropriate level “to define measures to restore the *status quo* in the western sector [Ladakh], which has been altered by force in the last two years, and to remove current tensions in the area.” If this was accepted by China, the Indian Government was willing to start talks in Peking on Oct. 15, as proposed in the latest Chinese Note.

In mid-September 1962 border clashes occurred at the eastern end of the Himalayan frontier, which had been quiet since the Longju incident in 1959 [see 17115 A]. An official spokesman in New Delhi announced on Sept. 13 that a group of Chinese soldiers had crossed the McMahon Line “in the area of the trijunction of the borders of Bhutan, India, and Tibet” and had reached points near Towang (alternatively spelled Tawang), at the extreme western end of the Indo-Tibetan border. A week later (Sept. 20) there was an exchange of fire in this area lasting several hours, in which three Indian soldiers were killed and casualties inflicted on the Chinese. Whereas the Government of India stated that the clash had occurred near Dhola, two miles south of the 14,000-ft. Tangla Ridge (also known as Thagla Ridge, forming the McMahon Line boundary in this sector), the Chinese alleged that it had taken place on Tibetan territory north of the border.

Apart from occasional sporadic firing the N.E.F.A. border remained generally quiet until Oct. 10, when another and more serious clash occurred at the extreme western end of the McMahon Line in which the Indians and the Chinese admitted 17 and 33 casualties respectively. As in the previous incident, discrepant versions of the area of the fighting were given by the two sides—the Indians stating that it had taken place south of Tangla Ridge, where 200-400 Chinese troops had attacked with mortars and automatic weapons, and the Chinese giving the location as “the Che Dong area of Tibet north of the so-called McMahon Line.” Both sides claimed to have acted in

self-defence and accused the other of violating the border and of “aggressive designs,” the incident giving rise to further lengthy Note exchanges between the two countries. An Indian Note of Oct. 16 proposed the restoration of the *status quo* as it existed on the McMahon Line on Sept. 8, 1962, as creating the necessary conditions for talks on the peaceful settlement of the border dispute.

The text of four Notes exchanged since mid-September (two by either side) was released in New Delhi on Oct. 12. The first Chinese Note accused the Indian forces of “systematic nibbling activities along the entire length of the Sino-Indian frontier”; alleged specifically that Indian forces had attacked Chinese border guards inside Chinese territory at a place described as “the Che Dong area under the Jurisdiction of Le village in Tibet”; and gave the geographical co-ordinates (i.e. the latitude and longitude) of the scene of the alleged incursion. In reply, the Government of India pointed out (1) that the co-ordinates given by the Chinese placed the scene of the alleged incident well north of the McMahon Line inside Tibet, where there had never been any Indian troops or outposts; and (2) that whereas the village of Le was in Tibet, the locality described by the Chinese as Che Dong was known to Indians as Dhola, a post two miles south of the McMahon Line inside Indian territory. After giving the geographical co-ordinates of Dhola, the Indian Note accused China of “deliberately confusing the precise location where Chinese troops are carrying out aggressive activities inside India.”

The second Chinese Note (Oct. 6) accepted India's co-ordinates of Dhola as that of Che Dong but maintained that the McMahon Line ran south of that place, which was claimed to be in Chinese territory. The Indian reply (Oct. 10) commented that it was “indeed surprising that the Chinese Government have abandoned the co-ordinates given as the location of Che Dong and, without compunction or embarrassment, have switched over to the co-ordinates given by India.”

The week Oct. 10-18 saw further sharp Note exchanges, characterized by a (1) Chinese allegation that Indian aircraft had made a reconnaissance flight over Lhasa; (2) emphatic Indian denials that any Indian planes had ever flown over Tibet, coupled with charges that Chinese planes had themselves flown over Indian territory on numerous occasions; and (3) a Chinese threat to shoot down any Indian planes “intruding into Chinese airspace.” The Chinese Notes, worded in the strongest terms, accused India of “concocting clumsy lies” to disguise her “frantic aggressive attacks” north of the McMahon Line, which was described as a border “treacherously concocted by Britain.”

In view of the disturbed situation on India's North-East frontier, it was announced in New Delhi on Oct. 5 that the Army corps on the border facing China had been divided into two separate corps, each with its area of responsibility. Under the reorganization, (1) Lieut.-General B. M. Kaul became responsible for that section of the border facing China in Uttar Pradesh, Sikkim, Bhutan, and the N.E.F.A.; and (2) Lieut.General Umrao Singh was given responsibility for the area south of the Brahmaputra River, covering Nagaland and the border with East Pakistan. Previously, India's entire northeastern border with China had been guarded by a single Army corps (the Eastern Command) under General Umrao Singh.

One of the consequences of the deterioration in Sino-Indian relations during 1962 was the lapsing of the eight-year agreement on Indian trade with Tibet, which had been signed in 1954 [see 13890 A; 13588 A] and expired without renewal on June 3, 1962.

China had proposed in December 1961 that the 1954 agreement should be renewed on its expiration, and that negotiations should be held between the two countries for this purpose. In April 1962, however, Mrs. Lakshmi Menon (Minister of State in the External Affairs Ministry) told the Indian Parliament that negotiations could only take place after China withdrew from Indian territory which she had illegally occupied, thereby restoring the original *status quo*. The agreement accordingly expired on June 3, on which date the Chinese Government issued a statement accusing India of “not only rejecting China's peaceful proposal [for a renewal of the 1954 agreement] but levelling malicious slanders at China and even demanding... the reversal of non-existent Chinese aggressive policies.” The Peking statement also announced the closing down of the Chinese trade agencies at Kalimpong and Calcutta.

Following the expiration of the 1954 agreement, Mr. Nehru told the *Lok Sabha* on June 6, 1962, that the Indian trade missions in Tibet (at Gyantse, Tatung, and Gartok) had ceased to function and were being withdrawn immediately. Five days later the Government of India announced that Customs duties would be imposed on all goods exported to or imported from Tibet, which would henceforth be treated as a “foreign territory” for trade purposes.

In the early hours of Oct. 20 the Chinese Army launched a powerful offensive both on India's North-East frontier and 1,000 miles to the west in Ladakh, supported by artillery, mortars, and mountain guns. As stated above, the Chinese did not advance in Ladakh beyond the line claimed as Chinese territory, though capturing a number of Indian outposts. In the N.E.F.A., however, a deep penetration of over 100 miles south of the McMahon Line brought the Chinese within sight of the plains of Assam before the advance was halted on Nov. 21. Both in Ladakh and the N.E.F.A. the Indian troops fought with great courage and tenacity to hold their positions, inflicting much heavier losses on the Chinese than they suffered themselves; owing, however, to the great numerical superiority of the Chinese forces, the Indian Army was forced to abandon many important strategic positions at both ends of the Himalayan border. The operations in the N.E.F.A. and Ladakh are summarized below.

On the North-East frontier the Chinese launched a massive attack at the western end of the McMahon Line which drove the Indians from Tangla Ridge and overwhelmed two Indian outposts (Dhola and the nearby Khinzemane post) after 24 hours' fierce fighting. The Indian Defence Minister, Mr. Krishna Menon, said that the Chinese had attacked in this sector in at least divisional strength; that Indian losses had been heavy; but that Chinese losses were at least four times greater, the Chinese having attacked in “human wave” formation regardless of casualties.

A statement by the Indian Defence Ministry pointed out that the Chinese, in addition to their great superiority in manpower and fire-power, also enjoyed important geographical and logistical advantages, namely: (1) they were attacking downwards from the mountain heights, whereas the Indian defenders were having to fight uphill; (2) as the Chinese military build-up had been in progress for a long period, the Chinese were much better acclimatized to the bitter cold, atmospheric conditions, and the mountainous terrain than the Indian forces, who had had much

less time for acclimatization; (3) as regards transport, the Chinese were within easy reach of their Tibetan bases through a network of military roads extending to the McMahon Line, whereas Indian troops in forward areas were dependent for supplies on air drops by transport planes.

During the next three days the Chinese attack developed into a general offensive at both ends of the McMahon Line. In the west, the Chinese advanced six or seven miles south of Dhola, captured Bum La pass (10 miles east of Tangla Ridge), and threatened to outflank Towang, the most advanced Indian forward base in this area, situated at the head of a jeep road from Tezpur. In the east, a heavy attack was launched on the Indian border post of Kibitu, 20 miles from the Burmese frontier, while in the centre of the McMahon Line Chinese forces were reported to be active in the Longju area and in occupation of the frontier post of Longju itself [Longju had been occupied by the Chinese in the 1959 border incidents, but in the summer of 1962 they were reported to have evacuated it after an outbreak of epidemic disease; it was believed, however, that the Indians had not reoccupied it.]

Towang, 16 miles south of the McMahon Line, fell to the Chinese on Oct. 25 despite bitter Indian resistance, heavy casualties being suffered by both sides; the Chinese threw an entire division, about 10,000 troops, into the assault on Towang, which was defended by a much smaller Indian force. The local population of about 300 had been evacuated beforehand, together with the abbot and monks of Towang monastery—an important Buddhist centre which gave refuge to the Dalai Lama during his flight from Tibet in 1959. Meanwhile, at the eastern end of the McMahon Line the Chinese had overrun the Kibitu post and were pushing forward towards Walong, 15 miles south of the frontier; fierce fighting was reported at the approaches to Walong, marked by many individual acts of bravery by Indian soldiers—notably the heroic feat of an Indian N.C.O. who killed eight Chinese in a single-handed charge before he was himself shot down.

From Oct. 28 to Nov. 14 there was a relative lull on the North-Eastern front, though sharp patrol clashes occurred from time to time; during this period the reinforced Indian troops slightly improved their positions in some sectors and recaptured the village of Jang, a few miles from Towang. On Nov. 15-16, however, the Chinese again launched two powerful offensives with strong artillery and mortar support, at the eastern and western ends of the McMahon Line respectively. Reports from the front stated that about 30,000 Chinese troops were in action, equivalent to three divisions.

In the eastern sector the Chinese offensive was directed against Walong, which fell on Nov. 18 after three days' violent fighting in which both sides suffered severe losses, particularly the Chinese. Though repelling wave after wave of Chinese assaults, into which an estimated 20,000 troops were thrown, the Indians were eventually forced to evacuate Walong and fall back for about 10 miles after being driven from one position after another by sheer weight of numbers. By capturing Walong the Chinese gained control of the most forward Indian airstrip in this area, left the Indian defenders more than 100 miles from their nearest source of supplies, and imperilled the entire Indian position at the eastern end of the border.

In the western sector a still more serious situation arose when the Chinese, attacking in great strength south of Towang, outflanked the Fourth Indian Division holding the 14,000-ft. Se La

pass. While one Chinese force, estimated at four brigades, launched a frontal attack on the pass itself, another powerful Chinese force carried out a “pincer” movement far to the south which succeeded in cutting the only road linking the Se La pass with the key defence centre of Bomdila, 32 miles to the south as the crow flies but 80 miles by a tortuous road over the mountains. As a result, the Se La pass was rendered untenable as a defensive position; its defenders were faced with a fighting withdrawal down a valley already cut by the Chinese; and Bomdila itself was seriously threatened, the road having been cut at a point near that town.

The success of the Chinese “pincer” movement was due to the construction, in an extraordinarily short time, of vehicle roads from Bum La pass to Towang, thereby enabling the Chinese to bring up strong reinforcements preparatory to launching their latest offensive. The New Delhi Correspondent of *The Times* said that a “great force” of coolies moving with the van of the Chinese Army had in an “amazingly short time” driven roads from Bum La to Towang despite the “precipitous ridges and deep valleys” of the terrain.

Bomdila fell to the Chinese on Nov. 19, constituting the worst Indian reverse of the month-old Himalayan campaign and jeopardizing the entire Indian position in the Kameng division of the N.E.F.A. north of the Brahmaputra. Most of the town's population (about 2,000) had been evacuated on the approach of the Chinese forces. With the Indian Army falling back to new defensive positions, the Chinese advanced another 30 or 40 miles southward during the next 24 hours until, on Nov. 21, they halted their advance four miles north of Foothills, a small town on the edge of the Assam plains. At the cessation of hostilities the Indian forces were drawn up on a defence line covering Foothills.

The North-East Frontier Agency and northern Assam, showing the area of the fighting in this sector. (reproduced, by permission, from *The Times*)

The following description of the military position after the fall of Bomdila and immediately before the cease-fire was given on Nov. 19 by the *Daily Telegraph* Special Correspondent in New Delhi:

“The fall of Bomdila means that the Chinese forces... have covered some 90 miles... in a three-day advance. It has taken the Chinese less than a month to push a road through from Bum La pass on the McMahon Line to Towang, bring up artillery and heavy 120 min. mortars, and organize for a two-pronged offensive. This is a prodigious feat as, although Towang is only 12 miles from the old frontier as the crow flies, the terrain is ridged with ranges running up to 17,000 ft. The Indians had dug themselves in and brought up 25-pounders to secure the Se La positions. But when the Chinese hit them frontally... a few miles beyond Towang they were, according to the New Delhi spokesman, faced with overwhelming superiority in numbers and weapons. At the same time the Chinese ran a new division around the right or eastern side of So La and broke through to cut the road Just above Bomdila....”

At the time Peking announced a cease-fire [see below] the military situation in the N.E.F.A. was as follows: (1) at the eastern end of the border the Chinese had captured Walong, advanced 10 to 15 miles southward, and were less than 100 miles from the Digboi oilfields in north-east Assam; (2) at the western end of the border the Chinese had advanced over 100 miles south of the

McMahon Line and reached almost to the plains of Assam, the advance being halted 40 miles north of the Brahmaputra and about the same distance from Tezpur, from which Indian Army H.Q. had been moved to Gauhati.

With the fall of Bomdila and the Chinese advance southward, the wives and families of Britons working in the oilfields and tea plantations of northern Assam were evacuated to Calcutta by air on Nov. 20 and succeeding days; about 650 were evacuated by Indian civil airliners in 48 hours, as well as the families of American Baptist missionaries in the area.

Over 18,000 civilian evacuees had arrived in Assam by the end of November from the Kameng, Luhit, Subansiri and Siang Frontier Divisions of the N.E.F.A. They were housed in camps at Gauhati, Dibrugarh, Nowgong, Mangaldai, Jorhat, Tezpur, and North Lakhimpur.

The map shows the southern most limit of the Chinese advance in the N.E.F.A. south of Bomdila; the advance was halted a few miles north of Foothills. (The Statesman, Calcutta)

Strong Chinese forces supported by tanks and artillery went into action on Oct. 20-21 against Indian outposts in two widely separated areas of Ladakh—one immediately south of the Karakoram Pass, at the north-western extremity of the Aksai Chin plateau, and the other in the Pangong Lake area 100 miles to the south-east. The Indian defenders, outnumbered in some cases by five to one, took heavy toll of the attackers but lost 11 posts in the Karakoram area and several others round Lake Pangong. They succeeded, however, in holding the two most important posts in these sectors—Daulat Beg Oldi, near the entrance to the Karakoram Pass, and Chusul, immediately south of Pangong Lake and at the head of a supply road from Leh.

Ladakh showing the area of the fighting. (The Economics)

While fighting continued in the north, the Chinese launched a new attack on Oct. 27 in the Damchok area, in the extreme south-eastern corner of Ladakh about 100 miles south-east of Chusul. Though losing the Damchok and Jara La posts, the Indian troops in this sector held their positions in face of greatly superior numbers and regained some ground in a counter-attack by the Jammu and Kashmir Militia. Thereafter there was a lull on the Ladakh front until the second week of November, when the Chinese again exerted heavy pressure on the Chusul post and shelled its airstrip, the highest in the world. Meanwhile it had been announced in New Delhi on Nov. 5 that Indian troops had made a strategic withdrawal from the Daulat Beg Oldi post to take up better defensive positions; it was emphasized that Daulat Beg Oldi had not been abandoned because of Chinese pressure and that it was two miles west of the line claimed by China as her frontier in Ladakh [see map above].

A few days before the ending of hostilities the Chinese launched several heavy but unsuccessful attacks on the Chusul post, and continued to shell its airfield; the reinforced Indian defenders repelled all the Chinese assaults and were still in possession of Chusul when the Chinese announced a cease-fire. At the cessation of hostilities the position in Ladakh was that the Chinese had occupied all outposts claimed to be within China's Ladakh border; that Daulat Beg Oldi had been evacuated by the Indians; and that Chusul (which, like Daulat Beg Oldi, is just west of the line claimed by China as her boundary) had been successfully held by the Indian Army. The

situation at Daulat Beg Oldi was obscure, as the Chinese made no claim to have occupied it after the Indian withdrawal; Indian press reports that the post had been occupied by the Chinese were officially denied by the Chinese Embassy in Karachi, and it thus appeared that Daulat Beg Oldi was a “no-man’s-land” between the opposing forces.

Definitive Indian casualty figures were not known for some time after the cease-fire, but on Dec. 12 Mr. Nehru announced that the Indian Army had suffered 6,765 casualties since Oct. 20, comprising 197 killed, 291 wounded, and 6,277 listed as missing; of those missing, the Chinese had promised to return 175 who had been wounded and taken prisoner. Mr. Nehru added that 12,197 Indian troops had regained Indian-held territory after having been encircled by the Chinese during the fighting. No casualty figures were given by the Chinese, although Peking statements described Chinese losses as “very heavy”; on Nov. 16 the Chinese claimed to have taken 927 Indian prisoners, including a brigadier and 16 other officers. The Indian Army did not claim to have taken any Chinese prisoners.

No military aircraft were used by either side during the Himalayan border fighting, the battles being waged exclusively by infantry and artillery; as stated above, the Chinese also used tanks in the Ladakh operations.

Mr. Nehru announced on Nov. 20 that Lieut.-General J. N. Chaudhury, G.O.C.-in-C. Southern Command, had been appointed Chief of Army Staff in succession to Lieut.-General P. N. Thapar, who had asked for long leave on grounds of health [General Thapar had taken over as Chief of Army Staff on May 8, 1961, *vice* General K.S. Thimayya, retiring.].

From the beginning of large-scale hostilities the Chinese Government asserted that their forces were acting in “self-defence” both on the McMahon Line and in Ladakh in face of what were described as “large-scale frenzied attacks” by “aggressive Indian forces.” The New China News Agency issued statements on Oct. 20-21 alleging that Indian troops were attacking in the “Tibet region” north of the McMahon Line and also in the “Sinkiang region” (i.e. Ladakh); saying that the Chinese frontier guards had been compelled to take “resolute defensive action” in both areas; giving the names of a number of posts “recovered” at the eastern end of the “disputed Himalayan border”; and rejecting as “slandorous lies” the statements by Mr. Krishna Menon and the Indian Defence Ministry that China had launched an offensive. On Oct. 23, however, Peking tacitly admitted the invasion of Indian territory when the Chinese Defence Ministry said that “in order to prevent Indian troops from staging a come-back and launching fresh attacks, Chinese frontier guards fighting in self-defence need no longer restrain themselves to the bounds of the illegal McMahon Line.”

The Chinese Government issued a statement on Oct. 24 which, after accusing the Indian forces of launching “a massive general offensive in both the eastern and western sectors of the Sino-Indian border,” proposed: that both countries should withdraw their armed forces 20 kilometres (12 miles) from the “line of actual control” at both ends of the Himalayan border; that they should agree not to cross that line;

The reasons for the sudden halting of the Chinese offensive at a moment when the Chinese armies had virtually broken through to the Brahmaputra and the plains of Assam aroused world-

wide conjecture, the following comment being brought on Nov. 21 by the Defence Correspondent of *The Times*:

“The Chinese decision to draw back appears at first sight to be a triumph of political expediency over military opportunism. It has been taken when the momentum of attack was at its heaviest, and there appeared to be little to prevent the Chinese from engulfing the plains of Assam and turning the Brahmaputra valley into a comprehensive line of communication, complete with airstrips, railways, roads, and inland waterways.... The reasons for their apparent change of plan are as difficult to assess accurately as their motives for beginning the attack in the first place.

“It may have been that the decision to announce a cease-fire was taken in Peking some time ago, and that the recent attacks have been initiated by an aggressively-minded local commander. The practice of mounting violent attacks immediately before a cease-fire was a characteristic of Chinese operations in Korea.

“One interpretation is that they have succeeded in their main aim of demonstrating to the Indian Government and to the world that they are able to make any border adjustments which they may think necessary whenever they think fit, and that they can now retire to conduct negotiations from strength. If this were indeed their original aim, they would clearly not wish to leave a Chinese army in Assam for the winter. It would have to be supplied almost entirely by air, except where it could live off the land; and it would be subjected to continual harassment by Indian troops with shortened interior lines of communication....

“The other main possibility is that pressure from Moscow, or some bargain with the Soviet Government, has been the deciding factor. It has been known for some time that the Russians regarded the Chinese adventure as ill-advised. After the Cuba crisis, which brought the contempt of Chinese Marxists upon the heads of the Soviet ‘appeasers’ [see 19093 A], it is hard to see what pressure from Moscow would be likely to impress Mao Tse-tung; but however loudly the Chinese may thunder against co-existence, and however fiercely they may conduct themselves when faced with the unprepared armies of India, they still depend for much of their technical and industrial help upon the Soviet Union....”

The Indian External Affairs Ministry issued two strongly-worded statements on the Chinese cease-fire proposals: one on Nov. 25 describing them as “the Peking Government's usual method of causing confusion by perverting the meaning of words”; and another on Nov. 27 describing the Chinese account of events leading to the outbreak of large-scale hostilities as “a complete travesty of fact.” The statement of November 25 was worded as follows:

“A certain amount of confusion has been caused by the deceptive Chinese proposal on the question of the withdrawals of Chinese and Indian troops to what the Chinese call the ‘line of actual control as on November 7, 1959.’ This is in contrast with the Government of India's position that if Chinese professions of peace and a peaceful settlement of differences are really genuine, at least the *status quo* which obtained before Sept. 8, 1962, when the Chinese committed fresh aggression in the North-East Frontier Agency, should first be restored.

“Those who do not understand the full significance of the Chinese proposal naturally ask why we cannot accept the earlier position as on November 7, 1959.

“As is known, the Chinese say that the line of actual control as on Nov. 7, 1959, is the same as what they call the ‘traditional and customary line’ in the western and middle sectors. By a clever manipulation the Chinese are attempting to project the line that they claimed for the first time... in 1960 to be identical with the line of actual control which they have now established by massive attacks.

“If in 1959 the Chinese really wanted to go back to the position as it existed on Nov. 7, 1959, we would naturally have welcomed it. But all this is mentioned by the Chinese Government for propaganda purposes, for the line of actual control today is not the same line that existed on Nov. 7, 1959. If the position on Nov. 7, 1959, was the same as today, as the Chinese Government claims, why was it necessary for China to mount massive attacks to gain further Indian territory?...

“If the Chinese Government really mean what they say regarding the restoration of the Nov. 7, 1959, positions of their forces in all sectors of the boundary, their withdrawal to those positions and the restoration of the positions of the Indian forces as they were prior to Sept. 8, 1952, would... meet the problem of disengagement, as there will be enough distance between the forces of the two sides to prevent any risk of a clash.

“To put it concretely, in the eastern sector the Chinese forces will go back to the positions they held on Nov. 7, 1959. That is, they will be on the other side of the boundary along the Himalayan watershed which they first crossed on Sept. 8, 1962. In the central sector the position will be the same—that is, they will be in the north of the highest watershed ridge. In the western sector [Ladakh] the Chinese forces will go back to the positions they held on Nov. 7, 1959—that is, along the line connecting the Spanggur post, Khurnak fort, and Konka La, and then northwards to join the main Aksai-Chin road.

“In other words, this is the Peking Government's usual method of causing confusion by perverting the meaning of words and making statements which bear no relation to reality.”

The second statement issued by the Indian External Affairs Ministry on November 27 said:

“The [Chinese] account of events leading up to the recent massive Chinese attacks on India... is a complete travesty of fact. It is entirely false to say that the Government of India have deliberately kept the Sino-Indian question unsettled. In fact there was no boundary question until China created it by intruding into Indian territory in 1957, and two years later by putting forward claims to large areas of India. India's northern frontier has always been a peaceful one, well recognized by both sides.

“During the last five years, Chinese forces have continuously extended their aggressive intrusions into Indian territory in the Ladakh sector and have been forcibly and unilaterally altering the long-established *status quo* of the boundary.

“In 1957, 58 Chinese troops appeared in that part of Aksai Chin where they were clearing a road, and their frontier guards detained an Indian patrol in this area in September 1958. By the beginning of 1959 Chinese forces had moved further west up to the Kongka Pass in the Chang Chemo River valley, and in October 1959 Chinese frontier guards encountered an Indian patrol there, killing nine and capturing the rest of the patrol.

“It was in the correspondence between the two Prime Ministers on these clashes that the Chinese Prime Minister for the first time, on Sept. 8, 1959, put in a claim for 50,000 square miles of Indian territory. Even thereafter the Chinese, while proclaiming that they were anxious to settle the border dispute by negotiation, surreptitiously continued their unlawful occupation of Indian territory.

“In April 1960, at the time when the Prime Ministers of India and China held talks and decided that officials of the two Governments should meet, a Chinese party intruded... in the Pangong Lake area. In June, while officials were having talks, the Chinese intruded again into the same area. In October 1960 an armed Chinese party was found in the Chang Chemo valley.

“By the middle of 1961 Chinese forces had come nearly 70 miles south-west of where they had been in 1958. They then established check-posts in the upper Chip Chap Valley... and constructed roads connecting this area with their bases in the rear. In 1962 they established a military post near Sumdo and cleared the road along the Quara Quash valley. Thirty-two new posts were set up between July and September 1962 in this sector.

“The Government of China have themselves accepted... that for them to go back to positions occupied by them in this sector [Ladakh] on Nov. 7, 1959, would mean ceding 6,000 square miles of territory.

“On Sept. 8, 1962, this policy of Chinese encroachment into Indian territory was extended to the eastern sector, where there had been no conflict of any kind except for their intrusion into the Longju area in August 1959 and April 1962. For the first time Chinese personnel intruded south of Tangla Ridge....

“Finally, on Oct. 20, 1962, Chinese forces commenced a massive attack on Indian defence posts in both the western and eastern sectors and began a large-scale invasion of Indian territory. They have overrun all Indian defence posts in the western sector [Ladakh] and have occupied a vast area of Indian territory in the eastern sector [south of the McMahon Line]. China's policy of unlawfully occupying Indian territory has now culminated in large-scale aggression.

“The Chinese statement of Nov. 21 refers to a cease-fire and withdrawals by Chinese frontier guards. These frontier guards have moved a long way since 1958, when they were in the northeastern corner of Aksai Chin at the northernmost end of the Sinkiang-Tibet caravan route, which is now a road; and so had the India-China frontier, as, according to China, the frontier moves with its forces!

“On the other hand the Government of India, in spite of these provocations, sought throughout to reach a settlement by peaceful means and repeatedly invited the Government of China to agree to reduce the tension. These efforts... were frustrated by Chinese intransigence....”

With the unilateral declaration of a cease-fire by China, no further hostilities occurred after Nov. 21 either in the N.E.F.A. or in Ladakh. On Dec. 1 the Chinese Government announced that its forces in the N.E.F.A. had begun to withdraw northward; on the following day it was announced in New Delhi that some 10,000 Indian troops cut off in the battle for the Se La pass had so far reached the Indian lines safely; while on Dec. 5 the Chinese handed over 64 wounded prisoners to the Indian Red Cross at Bomdila. While little definite news was forthcoming from the N.E.F.A., Indian and (3) that talks should be held between Mr. Chou En-lai and Mr. Nehru for a “friendly settlement” of the border dispute, either in Peking or, if Mr. Nehru preferred, in New Delhi.

The Government of India issued a statement the same day rejecting the Chinese proposals, insisting that Chinese troops should withdraw to the positions they held at Sept. 8, 1962, and emphasizing that India, while always ready to resolve differences by negotiation, could only do so “on the basis of decency, dignity, and self-respect” and not while hostile troops were on her territory. The Indian statement contained the following points:

(1) “Since it is the Chinese Government which on Oct. 20 hurled vast armies at various points on the India-China boundary... and [since] Chinese troops have advanced and are still advancing into Indian territory, India cannot and will not accept a position under which Chinese forces continue to commit aggression on Indian territory, occupy substantial areas, and use them as a bargaining-counter to force a settlement on their own terms.”

(2) “There is no sense or meaning in the Chinese offer to withdraw 20 kilometres from what they call the ‘line of actual control.’ What is this ‘line of actual control’? Is it the line they have created by aggression since the beginning of September? Advancing 40 or 60 kilometres by blatant military aggression and then offering to withdraw 20 kilometres provided both sides do so is a deceptive device which can deceive nobody.”

(3) “If the Chinese professions for a peaceful settlement of differences are genuine, let them withdraw at least to the positions they held along the boundary prior to Sept. 8, 1962. India will then be prepared to undertake talks... for easing the tension and correcting the situation caused by the unilateral forcible alteration of the *status quo* on the India-China border.”

A further Chinese Note was sent to New Delhi on Nov. 6 calling for a “positive response” to China's proposals for a “peaceful settlement”; describing the Government of India's statement as “prevarication”; and accusing India of having “closed the door to further negotiations.”

The Chinese Government issued a 2,000-word statement on Nov. 21 announcing that a cease-fire would be observed by all Chinese forces along the entire Himalayan front as from midnight on that date. It also announced: (1) that the Chinese forces would withdraw to positions “20 kilometres behind the line of actual control which existed between India and China on Nov. 7, 1959”; and (2) that China would set up “checkpoints” at places north of the “line of actual

control” in order to “forestall the activities of saboteurs and maintain order,” the location of these checkpoints being notified to the Indian Government. The Chinese statement was worded in part as follows:

“In the past two years, first in the western and then in the eastern sector of the Sino-Indian border, Indian troops crossed the line of actual control between China and India, nibbled into Chinese territory, set up strong-points for aggression, and provoked a number of border clashes.

“Relying on the advantageous military positions they had occupied, and having made full preparations, the Indian troops eventually launched massive armed attacks all along the line against the Chinese frontier guards on Oct. 20, 1962. This border conflict, deliberately provoked by India, has been going on for a month.

“The Chinese Government served repeated warnings in regard to the increasingly serious Indian encroachments and provocations, and pointed out the gravity of their consequences. The Chinese frontier guards maintained maximum self-restraint and forbearance in order to avert any border conflict. However, all these efforts proved of no avail, and Indian acts of aggression steadily increased.

“Pressed beyond the limits of endurance and left with no room for retreat, the Chinese frontier guards finally had no choice but to strike back resolutely in self-defence. After the present large-scale border conflict broke out, the Chinese Government quickly took initiative measures in an effort to extinguish the flames of conflict that had been kindled.

“On Oct. 24.... the Chinese Government put forward three reasonable proposals for stopping the border clashes, reopening peaceful negotiations, and settling the Sino-Indian boundary question.... On the very day it received them, the Indian Government hastily rejected these proposals and insisted that the Chinese Government should agree to restore the state of the boundary as it prevailed prior to Sept. 8, 1962; that is, India wanted to reoccupy large tracts of Chinese territory so that the Indian troops might regain a position from which they could launch massive armed attacks on the Chinese frontier guards at any time.

“In his reply to Premier Chou En-lai dated Nov. 1, Prime Minister Nehru put forward even more unreasonable demands which, on the one hand, required the Chinese Government to agree to the Indian troops reverting to their positions prior to Sept. 8; and on the other hand required the Chinese frontier guards not only to withdraw to their positions as on Sept. 8 but also to retreat further in the western sector [i.e. Ladakh] to the so-called positions of Nov. 7, 1959, as unilaterally defined for them by India—that is, requiring China to cede 5,000 to 6,000 square miles of Chinese territory....

“The Chinese Government's proposals are fair and reasonable [and] are capable of averting border clashes, ensuring border tranquillity, and bringing about a peaceful settlement of the Sino-Indian border question.... However, the Indian Government has so far rejected them and continues to expand the border conflict, thus daily aggravating the situation. To reverse this trend, the Chinese Government has decided to take initiative measures in order to promote the realization of these three proposals.

“The Chinese Government hereby declares the following:

(1) “ Beginning from 00.00 hours on Nov. 22,[i.e. midnight Nov. 21-22] the Chinese frontier guards will cease fire along the entire Sino-Indian border.

(2) “ Beginning from Dec. 1, 1962, the Chinese frontier guards will withdraw to positions 20 kilometres behind the line of actual control which existed between China and India on Nov. 7, 1959. In the eastern sector... the Chinese frontier guards... are prepared to withdraw from their present positions to the north of the line of actual control—that is, north of the illegal McMahon Line—and to withdraw 20 kilometres farther back from that line. In the middle and western sectors, the Chinese frontier guards will withdraw 20 kilometres from the line of actual control.

(3) “ In order to ensure the normal movement of the inhabitants in the Sino-Indian border area, forestall the activities of saboteurs, and maintain order there, China will set up check posts at a number of places on its side of the line of actual control, with a certain number of civil police assigned to each checkpost. The Chinese Government will notify the Indian Government of the location of these checkposts through diplomatic channels.

“These measures taken by the Chinese Government on its own initiative demonstrate its great sincerity for stopping the border conflict and settling the Sino-Indian boundary question peacefully.

“It should be pointed out, in particular, that after withdrawing the Chinese frontier guards will be far behind their positions prior to Sept. 8, 1962. The Chinese Government hopes that, as a result of the above-mentioned measures, the Indian Government will... make a positive response.

“Provided that the Indian Government agrees to take corresponding measures, the Chinese and Indian Governments can immediately appoint officials to meet at places agreed upon by both parties in the various sectors of the Sino-Indian border to discuss matters relating to the 20-kilometre withdrawal of the armed forces of each party to form a demilitarised zone, the establishment of checkposts by each party on its side of the line of actual control, and the return of captured personnel.

“When the talks between the officials of the two sides have yielded results, and these results have been put into effect, talks can be held by the Prime Ministers of the two countries for an amicable settlement of the Sino-Indian boundary question. The Chinese Government would welcome the Indian Prime Minister to Peking; if this would be inconvenient, the Chinese Prime Minister would be ready to go to Delhi.

“The Chinese Government sincerely hopes that the Indian Government will make a positive response. Even if the Indian Government fails to make such a response in good time, the Chinese Government will carry out the above-mentioned measures as scheduled.

“However, the Chinese Government cannot but take into account the following possible eventualities:

(1) “ That the Indian troops should continue their attack after the Chinese frontier guards have ceased fire and when they are withdrawing;

(2) “ That, after the Chinese frontier guards have withdrawn 20 kilometres from the entire line of actual control, the Indian troops should again advance to the line of actual control in the eastern sector, i.e. the illegal McMahon Line, and/or refuse to withdraw but remain on the line of actual control in the middle and western sectors; and,

(3) “ That, after the Chinese frontier guards have withdrawn 20 kilometres from the entire line of actual control, the Indian troops should cross the line of actual control and recover their positions prior to Sept. 8–i.e., again cross the illegal McMahon Line, and reoccupy the Kechilang River area north of the line in the eastern sector, reoccupy Wuji in the middle sector, and restore their 43 strongpoints for aggression in the Chip Chap River valley, the Galwan River valley, the Pangong Lake area, and the Damchok area, or set up more strongpoints for aggression on Chinese territory in the western sector.

“The Chinese Government solemnly declares that, should the above eventualities occur, China reserves the right to strike back in self-defence, and the Indian Government will be completely responsible for all the grave consequences arising therefrom....” press reports stated that the Chinese were gradually withdrawing, that Indian and Chinese patrols were out of touch, and that Indian civilian officials were gradually moving back into the areas vacated by the Chinese. Information from Ladakh was equally scanty, though press reports stated that Chusul had been strongly reinforced by Indian troops.

As stated in the Chinese cease-fire declaration, Mr. Chou En-lai had written to Mr. Nehru on Nov. 4 informing him of China's proposals for ending hostilities, as subsequently set out in the declaration of Nov. 21. In his reply (sent on Nov. 14) Mr. Nehru said that China was “making the magnanimous offer of retaining gains of earlier aggression plus such other gains as it can secure... from the latest aggression,” adding that this was “a demand to which India will never submit whatever the consequences and however long and hard this struggle may be.”

In a further letter on Nov. 28, Mr. Chou warned Mr. Nehru that the disengagement of troops along the border could not merely be achieved by a Chinese withdrawal without a reciprocal withdrawal by the Indian side; should India refuse to co-operate, he added, “the cease-fire which has been effected is likely to be upset.” Replying on Dec. 1, Mr. Nehru said that the “line of actual control on Nov. 7, 1959 [mentioned in the Chinese cease-fire declaration] is along the line of control established by your forces after the massive attacks mounted since Oct. 20.” After stressing that the Government of India must have more information as to what the “line of actual control” meant, Mr. Nehru again urged China to accept India's “clear and straightforward proposal” for the restoration of the *status quo* as it existed on Sept. 8, 1962.

In reply to Indian memoranda of Nov. 23 and 30 asking for clarification of the Chinese cease-fire declaration, a Chinese memorandum was presented in New Delhi on Dec. 9 saying that the Chinese Government's declaration of Nov. 21 was “clear and explicit” and demanding a “clear and definite” reply as to whether or not India agreed: (1) to a cease-fire; (2) to the withdrawal of the armed forces of both sides 12 miles from the “line of actual control on Nov. 7”; and (3) to

meetings between officials of the two countries to discuss mutual troop withdrawals so as to form a demilitarized zone, the establishment of checkpoints, and the return of captured personnel. After saying that China had shown “great forbearance and accommodation” in her cease-fire offer, the Chinese memorandum urged that both sides should “defer the differences on the border question for settlement by future negotiations, and refrain from haggling endlessly over them at the present time.”

A spokesman of the Indian External Affairs Ministry said on Dec. 9 that the Chinese memorandum indicated that “the Chinese will consider no preposition other than their three-point proposal based on their own interpretation of the so-called line of actual control as on Nov. 7, 1959.” He added: “Instead of arguments or clarifications, an unveiled threat is delivered to the effect that peaceful negotiations can reopen only on the basis of the terms dictated by China. The [Chinese] statement... appears to be a sort of ultimatum.”

The Chinese Foreign Ministry issued a statement the same day (Dec. 9) rejecting what was described as India's “brazen demand” that Chinese forces should withdraw to the positions they held before Sept. 8, 1962, and adding that Indian insistence on this demand would “render it impossible to terminate the border conflict.”

In a statement on Dec. 8 to the Upper House of the Indian Parliament, Mr. Nehru disclosed that China had originally notified India of her intention to set up check-posts at four places on the McMahon Line where Indian posts had previously been located—at Dhola, Khinzemane, Kibitu, and Walong. Subsequently, however, the Chinese Government had informed India that check-posts would be established at only two points—namely, at Dhola and Longju.

The Chinese statement implied that India would essentially retain the McMahon Line border she held before the Chinese attack, except (1) at the extreme western end of the border, where the Chinese intended to hold Dhola, south of Tangla Ridge; and (2) in the central sector, where they intended to hold Longju, which, as stated above, had been a “no-man’s-land” for the past two years. On the other hand, India's insistence on the restoration of the *status quo* existing on Sept. 8, 1962, implied that China would have to withdraw from Dhola and Tangla Ridge.—(The Statesman, Calcutta - The Hindu, Madras - Indian High Commissioner's Office, London Times - Daily Telegraph - Guardian) (prev. rep. Himalayan Border Dispute, 18079 A; 17734 A; 17115 A.)

Note. Indian and international reactions to the Himalayan border crisis will be described in subsequent articles.—(Ed. K.C.A.)