

***A Note of the Historical Division of the Ministry of External Affairs on the India-China Frontier as directed by the Prime Minister.***

SECRET

THE FRONTIER WITH CHINA

We have always taken the view that our northern frontier is a traditional one and that there is no doubt as to where it lies. The principle of respect for territorial integrity in the preamble of the 1954 treaty with China assumed the existence of a well defined frontier and this was confirmed by the mention in one of the articles of six border passes Nipu [Lipu] Lekh, Dama, Kungri Bingri, Nitti, Mana and Shipki. In September 1954 the Prime Minister decided that our whole boundary (including that of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan) should be shown on maps as a continuous line and no reference should be made to undemarcated areas.

2. So far, however, the only map released on this basis has been the 1:70 miles map which is on too small a scale to commit us on frontier disputes. Maps of larger scale have had to be held up because of lack of finality in three areas:

- i. On the Ladakh Tibet frontier it has been suggested that the frontier be pushed eastwards from the Indus River to the Nailash [Kailash] mountains, as the area in between is utilized by Indian graziers;
- ii. The Bhutan Tibet frontier has not yet been surveyed and an officer has been sent to carry out the on the spot survey and ascertain the views of the Bhutanese;
- iii. In the Subansari Sector of the North East Frontier, the Prime Minister decided that the frontier should be placed as near to the village given

to Tibet as possible; and while a line on this basis has drawn we have been waiting an aerial survey which is planned in the near future.

3. People's [Republic of] China, on the other hand, has been bringing out maps of varying scales showing a frontier which cuts well into our territory. The most prominent of these are the maps of scale 1:4.2 million published in 1953, a map of the administrative division of China of scale 1:4 million early in April 1955 and a wall map of scale 1:8 million brought out early in 1956. When their attention has been brought to the wrong delineation of our frontier, the Chinese authorities have taken the line that they had made no surveys and not consulted bordering countries specifically says that that it has been based on a pre-war atlas. This argument, however is a weak one, especially as in the 1953 map such territory has been 'restored' to Burma and in the 1955 map the frontier between China and Outer Mongolia has been altered to cede more territory to Outer Mongolia. While it is true that the Chinese maps are crude and faulty alignment may be due to carelessness or ignorance, it is also possible that these maps may later be cited as precedents.

4. Examining the Chinese alignment in detail from Karakoram pass to Nepal. In Ladakh, all Chinese maps show considerable Indian territory in China:

(a) Aksai Chin, an uninhabited plateau of about 6,000 sq. miles and with an average elevation of 17,000 ft.

(b) The eastern half of the Chang Chenmo valley upto Lanak la. It is uninhabited but has valuable pastures.

(c) Drokpe Karpo valley, also a pasturing ground.

(d) The western half of Spanggur Tso

(e) The area north of the Chang Pass.

(f) An area about twenty miles west of Demchok valley.

In Punjab and Himachal Pradesh, the boundary shown in Chinese maps is the same as our line; but in Uttar Pradesh, Milang [Nilang] and Jadhong are included in Tibet.

### **Nepal-Tibet:**

Most Chinese maps show Nepal's Northern frontier correctly. But the new Map of Tibet (March 1951) includes Simikot, the triangular area between the Himalayas in the North, the Kuwari Khola river to the west and the Humla Karnali river on the east, in Tibet and the map of China published in 1955 by the Lhasa Tibetan news publication Department includes Mount Everest well within Tibet.

### **Sikkim Tibet:-**

Chinese maps seem to align this frontier correctly, though they are on too small a scale for us to be sure. But all Chinese maps show Sikkim and Bhutan outside India's international boundaries.

### **Bhutan Tibet:**

Chinese maps show Bhutan Northern boundary correctly. But as regards her eastern frontier with Tawang the New Map of Tibet (March 1951) shows it as running north to south in an almost straight line. This transfers about 1,800 sq. miles of Bhutanese territory to Tibet. Other Chinese maps show this frontier as a loop which annexes to Tibet a smaller area of about 1,000 sq. miles.

### **North East frontier:-**

All Chinese maps show the Karenga, Subansiri, Siang and Lohit divisions of NEFA in China.

5. In three areas these claims to territory are not on maps alone. We have had reports that the Chinese are using the route from Western Tibet to Sinkiang that runs through Aksai Chin. A Nullah runs through Demchok village and the local inhabitants regard it as the boundary between Tibet and Ladakh. The Kashmir Government is collecting revenue only from Nodozen to northern Demchok and Indian checkpost personnel at Mayul and Demchok have confined their activities till how to this Northern half of the village. An Indian outpost was stationed on the Northern side in 1954 but was withdrawn in 1955. Chinese patrols from Tashigong have visited southern Demchok over half a dozen times during the last three years. During the negotiations at Peking on Indo-Tibetan trade both sides claimed the whole village but left the matter to verification on the ground. In the Nilang-Jadhang area no agreement had ever been reached between Tibet and India on the border. India claims the Sutlej-Jadhang watershed at the frontier and in 1954 it was decided to establish Jadhang as a base checkpost with Pulam Sumda further north as an advance post in the summer. Nilang would serve as a checkpost for registration of traders. These checkposts, however, have not been adequately established and on 28th April 1956 a party of twelve Chinese soldiers was seen about half a mile from Nilang village.

6. In case a general discussion of the frontier is opened with China, however, we will have to bear in mind the possibility of their also reviving certain claims now dormant. This is most likely regarding the Drokpo Karpo pastures in Ladakh. In 1918 the Tibetans had kidnapped a Ladakhi in Drokpo Karpo and when releasing him asserted their right to the area, and since then they have never expressly renounced their claim. In 1929 the Surveyor General of India reported in favour of the Tibetan claim. Nor may the discussion be limited on their part to map claims. This presumption is supported by recent Chinese activity in Girthi valley which has no basis of

map claims. The traditional boundary in this area as shown on both Indian and Chinese maps is the Alaknanda Sutlej water parting about 30 to 40 miles north of the main Himalayan range. The Tibetans assert their rights to establish an outpost at Bara Hoti, two miles south of the border pass of Tunjun La, and to graze their flocks around Lapthal ten miles south east of Bara Hoti, and lay claim to territory even upto Badrinath, thirty miles south west of Bara Hoti.

In 1914 the British had protested against the establishment of the Tibetan outpost at Bara Hoti and the attempt does not seem to have been repeated after 1916, but in June 1954 the effort of a Tibetan Sarji to set up a camp at Hoti had to be repulsed by our Border Security Force. The Chinese officially protested against this in 1955 and sent a detachment to Hoti and throughout that trade season Chinese and Indian detachments faced each other. It was also reported that Tibetan officials had collected grazing taxes around Lapthal. It was later decided to send a joint investigation team to determine whether Hoti plain is north or south of the Tunjum La Pass, but the Chinese Govt has shown no anxiety to implement this proposal to solve a particular dispute.

7. Other claims which China may raise in any general discussion are on the Nepal and Sikkim frontiers. In Nepal, apart from the Simikot area claimed on the map, China might revive her claim to the Mustang 'Valley on the ground that the Raja of Mustang is only a vassal of Nepal and his territory does not form an integral part of Nepal. Tibet has also for long asserted that the Burlung Khola pastures belong to her, while at present the inhabitants of Kimthanga and Tundam villages are paying taxes to both Nepalese and Tibetan authorities. In Sikkim, China might claim, which had been occupied by Tibet in 1886, and Gieogong, which lies north of the main Himalayan range, the traditional frontier in this region.

8. The Russian Atlas Mira (1954) gives a delineation of our frontier which is mostly the same as that in Chinese Maps. Drokpo Karpo, however, is included in India and on the Nepal Tibet frontier two stretches of Tibetan territory are included in Nepal. In the Masalu sector the traditional boundary is along the Masyandi-Tamchok water parting but the atlas Mira locates the water parting much further north east than it actually is, includes the Tibetan territory between Mustang and no pass in Nepal and aligns the frontier along the watershed upto Thaple pass. Further east, the whole of Nyalam (Kuti) Dzong is shown as Nepalese territory. In the Kyirong Dzong sector, on the other hand, the boundary appears to be shown along the Langtang Himalayas and the Lende Khola stream is shown wholly in Tibet. Unlike in Chinese maps, Sikkim and Bhutan are shown within India's international boundary. As regards the Bhutan frontier, the Atlas Mira ignores the 1947 revision when the alignment in the Palu La Kangri sector was shifted north east to run along the Kula Kangri peak. In the north east the whole of the sub montane part of the Assam Himalayas (the Kameng, Siang and Subansiri Frontier Divisions and most of the Luhit Frontier Division of the North East Frontier Agency), which is under our active administration, is shown as part of China. The Russian map does not follow the latest Chinese maps which include the whole of the Luhit Frontier Division in China. But the discrepancies between Russian and Chinese maps are minor and much significance need not be attached to them. They seem to be the result of an effort to copy the frontier from some small scale Chinese maps. It may be noted, however, that the Russian Atlas Mira does not adopt the latest Chinese practice of stating that their knowledge is based on old Kuomintang maps. It is possible that in the Northern sector, as maps showing our boundary have only been published during the last three years, the Russian failure to demarcate the boundary as aligned by us is due to ignorance. But

this argument cannot hold for the north eastern frontier which was defined by mutual consent as long ago as 1914 and has been shown in our maps during the last twenty years. Our Ambassador in Moscow was asked on 20 March to bring this question Of the wrong delineating of our whole frontier to the notice of the Soviet Government, and a reply from his is awaited.

9. It is therefore suggested: -

- i. Maps showing our frontier alignment be brought out as soon as possible, after taking a decision on the Kailash range, without waiting for the aerial survey of NEFA which is likely to take "some time. We should have our officers on the Bhutan frontier by August.
- ii. Checkposts be established wherever possible and our administration pushed up to the frontier. Where checkposts are not possible, as in Aksai China, open and regular expeditions may be the answer. In cases of trans border pastoral rights we may adopt the British practice of explicitly informing Tibetan graziers that they "are being permitted to enjoy their rights on what is clearly our territory, and they should seek this permission formally every year from our " check posts.

Historical Division, Ministry of External Affairs,

**Note recorded by Joint Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs  
T.N.Kaul on the above note of the Historical Division**

May 11, 1956

TOP SECRET

MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

As desired by FS, a note prepared by the Historical Division along with a map showing the Indian Line, the Chinese line and the Russian line is attached. I discussed the matter with the director and Deputy Director Historical Division and Special Officer, Frontier Areas. It is suggested that Home and Defence Ministries may also be invited to the discussion that Prime Minister proposes to hold on the subject. Our tentative suggestions are as under: -

- (1) We should issue our new maps without delay showing the most favourable line as our frontier. Waiting for detailed surveys will take a long time and the issue of maps should not be delayed for this reason.
- (2) These unrestricted maps should be distributed widely among the various schools and libraries all along our border. It is for the consideration whether copies should also be presented to Chinese and Soviet Embassies.
- (3) We should set up check post and/or out posts in all the disputed areas without delay, especially at the following places: -
  - (1) Demchok
  - (2) Drokpo Karpo
  - (3) Pulam Sumda
  - (4) Bara Hoti

Although it will be difficult to set up permanent outposts in all these places, we should try to construct permanent houses where our check posts



personnel will remain as long as possible. With regard to other inaccessible and uninhabited areas like Akasai Chin we might send reconnaissance and survey parties.

We do not think it would be advisable for us to reopen the whole question of the Indo Tibet border. If the Chinese raise it, we should tell them that our border is well defined, is well understood and there is nothing to be discussed. But if there are any small specific areas like Bara Hoti and Nilang Jadang areas where their troops have made incursions during recent years, we may discuss these on the basis of recognition of the passes at Tsang Chokla and Tunjunla as our boundary. The latter is not mentioned in the Sino Indian agreement as a border pass nor is the former. We may remind the Chinese Embassy and the Chinese Government that last year they made a suggestion that a Joint Investigation Team should be sent to Bara Hoti to find if it was north or south of Tunjunla. If it was north, then it would be in Chinese territory, if south, then it would be in Indian territory. We may ask them to send an officer who can go there with our officer to verify this fact. As for Tsang Chokla, which is the border pass of the Nilang Jadang area, there has been some dispute in the past and the British had at one time agreed to give the territory, almost upto Nilang to Tibet, but the Tibetans were claiming right up to Gum Gum Nalla. It will be right for the British to do this because they were themselves enjoying extra territorial rights in Tibet, but we can point out to Tibet as that since we have given up this extra territorial rights in Tibet we do not accept any extra territorial rights that the British might have given to Tibet.

It is a ticklish matter which has to be carefully considered. Most of the disputed areas are not as easily accessible from India as from Tibet.

The present time is perhaps more suitable for discussion of specific instances of frontier disputes like Bara Hoti and Nilang Jadang are than later when China has consolidated her position in Tibet. Some western countries are

exploiting the possibilities of friction between India and China along the Indo Tibet frontier and we may point out to the Chinese the desirability of settling this latter once and for all. So far as we are concerned, we made it clear to them during our negotiations on the Sino Indian agreement 1954, that our negotiations on the Sino Indian agreement 1954, that all pending matter had been settled. They did not expressly accept this position but they did not categorically contradict it either. It is suggested that we should adhere to this position and try to get recognition of it from the Chinese as soon as possible. We should also point out that their new maps had shown certain territorial adjustments with regard to Burma and Mongolian people's Republic and we shows express the hope that they will show our frontiers correctly in future maps. We may give them a copy of the map showing our correct frontier, if considered desirable. It would perhaps be better to take this matter up informally in order to gauge Chinese reaction and than take it up formally if their attitude is reportable.

Sd/-T.N. Kaul

11-5-1956

(Nehru Papers: Folio 443-1, P. 156-62)

**Note recorded by Foreign Secretary on the above**

MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,

Prime Minister may kindly recall his minute of May 6 placed below. In accordance with his wishes, a note has been prepared by the Historical

Division. This may be seen together with Shri Kaul's suggestions in his note of May 11.

2. I broadly agree with Shri Kaul's suggestions. As I have already told the Prime Minister, I think we should not at this stage raise with the Chinese Government the general question of demarcation of the entire Indo Chinese frontier. We shall have to take up the matter some time or other. The present position in which the Chinese Government continue to show large areas of Indian territory, particularly in the North East frontier as part of China is unsatisfactory. The Chinese explanation that they are merely copying it from the maps published during the Kuomintang regime is hardly convincing. For the moment, however, we should, besides, taking the other steps suggested by Shri Kaul, take up specifically with the Chinese Government the question of the four disputed areas mentioned by him. In course of discussions on these "disputes" we shall probably obtain an inkling into the Chinese thinking on the subject.

3. We have to take a more positive attitude if other countries show our areas as part of Chinese territory in their official maps. We are already doing so with the Soviet government.

4. It was Prime Minister's intention to discuss this subject in detail. Since I shall be out of Delhi for the next fortnight, SG may kindly obtain the Prime Minister's direction.

Sd/- S. Dutt

15.05.56

SG

PM

Secretary General recorded:

I agree.

Ad/- N.R. Pillai

17.5.56

Prime Minister recorded:

I agree.

Sd/- J. Nehru

17.05.56

(Nehru Papers: Folio 443-1, P. 165)