

Foreign Relations of the United States (1949)

Vol. IX

The Far East: China

893.00 Tibet/12-849: Telegram

The Ambassador in India (Henderson) to the Secretary of State

[Extracts]

New Delhi, December 8, 1949-4 p.m.

[Received 4:10 p.m.]

1523. 1. Embattle 1484, December 1 reported UK High Commissioner would call on Foreign Secretary Menon shortly to tell GOI of Tibetan request for aid from UK. UK officer told Embassy 6th this information had been given Bajpai several days ago together with UK suggestions re future GOI policy as outlined reftel.

4. UK High Commissioner has not yet received further reply from London in response Tibetan request for aid nor has it received instructions re next step in discussing Tibet with GOI. Meanwhile, however, UK High Commissioner fears prevailing viewpoint in GOI will be that Tibet must be written off and it is also fearful that GOI may even take defeatist line in regard to Nepal. Indication that GOI might seek limit Nepalese imports of arms through India (Embdesp 1027, December 1)¹ seemed a bad sign.

5. UK officer referred to long-standing plan to send small UK mission visit Lhasa and said it now seemed probable this mission would not be sent spring because it might draw too much attention to Tibet and cause Chinese Communists attempt to assert sovereignty over Tibet sooner than they would otherwise do. His emphasis on avoiding

¹ Not Printed.

“rocking boat” may have been designed to discourage US from sending representatives to Lhasa next summer although neither in this or any other conversation have we mentioned that this possibility is under consideration.

6. Embassy becoming increasingly doubtful re advisability sending proposed US mission to Tibet and Suggests Department defer decision on this pending receipt more considered views which will be submitted shortly.

Sent Department 1523; Department pass London.

HENDERSON

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893.00 Tibet/12-2149

Memorandum of conservation, by the Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs (Sprouse)

[WASHINGTON,] December 21, 1949

During the course of a conservation with Mr. Graves² today on another subject I gave him a brief summary (copy attached)³ of the statement the Department had authorized Ambassador Henderson to make to the Tibetan representative at New Delhi in reply to the Tibetan appeal for material assistance. I explained that I would also give him, in accordance with his request, the substance of the Department 's reply to the Tibetan appeal for assistance in obtaining membership in the UN when that reply was despatched.⁴

² Hubert A. Graves, Counselor of the British Embassy

³ Not Printed

⁴ This was done on December 28.

Mr. Graves then launched into a description of the British view of the Tibetan situation, pointing out that the British Government was of the opinion that nothing should be done to discourage the Tibetan authorities and that an effort should be made to give them moral encouragement even though it was not possible to extend material aid. He further stated that the British Government felt that the Government of India should take the lead in this problem and that the UK High Commissioner at New Delhi was making efforts along that line. He said that the British Government would appreciate whatever action the U.S. Government might be able to take along similar lines.

I informed him that Ambassador Henderson had discussed the problem both with the Indian authorities and with the UK High Commissioner and that I felt certain that his efforts were being made toward the desired end. I pointed out that it was also the opinion of the Department that we should not do anything which would discourage the Tibetans and that the Department's reply which had given him was framed with that idea in mind. In reply to my query, Mr. Graves said that he did not think that the British Government was prepared to give military aid to the Tibetans or to replace any military material which the Government of India might be persuaded to make available to the Tibetans but that the British Government was endeavoring to encourage the Indian authorities to give small arms and ammunition to the Tibetans.

During the conversation Mr. Graves showed me a Hansard report of December 14, 1949, in which was published a letter from Mr. Eden⁵ to Dr. T.V. Soong⁶ under date of August 5, 1943 and an accompanying memorandum setting forth the British position with respect to Tibet.

⁵ Another Eden, in 1943 British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

⁶ In 1943 Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs

Mr. Graves stated that it was his view that this still represented the British position in regard to Tibet.

(Subsequent to his return to the British Embassy Mr. Graves sent me a copy of this letter and the memorandum, a copy of which is attached.)⁷

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893.00 Tibet/12-3049: Telegram

The Ambassador in India (Henderson) to the Secretary of State

NEW Delhi, December 30, 1949- 1p.m

[Received 1:56 p.m.]

1619. Embattle 1523, December 8. In conversation this morning with Embassy officer, Jha⁸ of Ministry External Affairs said that following, although not yet approved by Nehru, represented thinking of Ministry re Indian policy towards Tibet.

(1) No purpose would be served in raising question of political status of Tibet at this time. Ministry feels that making issue of Tibetan question at present might precipitate Communist decision invade pursuant their declared intention liberating country.

(2) At some time subsequent Indian recognition of Chinese Communist Government, scheduled take place tomorrow, Indian Government may initiate "diplomatic pourparlers " with Chinese re status Tibet as GOI strongly in favour of continuance Tibetan autonomy to same extent as has been case in past.

⁷ Latter not printed.

⁸ C.S. Jha, Joint Secretary of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs in charge of American Affairs.

(3) GOI has received number requests for arms and ammunition from Tibetan Government, has complied with some of these requests, and will send more in future. It cannot, however, render active military assistance in form of despatch troops to Lhasa.

(4) Ministry External Affairs has not considered what action should be taken in connection with Tibetan application for membership UN.

It appears clear from foregoing India is not requesting Chinese Communists to respect Tibetan autonomy, or even to recognize previous treaties between Chin and pre-Independence Indian Government dealing with Tibet, as prerequisite to establishment relations. Embassy inclined doubt GOI will press Chinese Communists strongly re recognition Tibetan autonomy even if "diplomatic pourparlers " mentioned by Jha initiated at all, since Pannikar, Indian Ambassador China, will probably not wish allow question further Tibet disturb cordial relationship he hopes establish between Indian Government and Chinese Communists. We have expression amount of arms sent Tibet is negligible.

HENDERSON