

A FOOL'S GAME

The China-India Border Dispute

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When a country had a long and chequered history, it gives enough material, it supplies enough material for any party to support any claim.—Indian Prime Minister Nehru in the Lok Sabha, September 4, 1959.

Mr. Nehru, in the statement quoted above, was talking about Tibet, but what he said applies to the whole vast mountainous region which India shares with her neighbors to the north. It would be hard to find any part of the world with a longer or more checkered history. And the claims of all parties concerned are numerous, conflicting, and plausibly supported by historical material.

Under these circumstances, it should be obvious to a 10-year-old that the only way to a peaceful resolution of the various claims and counter-claims is through a process of compromise. And this was in fact exactly the way the borders between China on the one hand and Burma and Nepal on the other were settled. In both cases, the status quo was taken as the starting point of negotiations, and adjustments one way or the other were made on the basis of geographic factors, historical claims, and the particular interests of the parties involved. Both borders were demarcated and recognized in formal international treaties signed in the fall of 1961. Neither was the scene of armed clashes. On balance, it seems clear that in this process of give-and-take, China gave considerably more than she took.*

As between China and India, matters have taken a very different course. No compromises have been made; indeed no basis for negotiations has ever been agreed upon. And the dis-

* For these and many other facts we are indebted to an excellent booklet entitled *Whither India-China Relations?* by the Ceylonese writer Theja Gunawardhana (Colombo, December 1961), henceforth cited as WICR.

puted areas have been the scene of numerous armed clashes, culminating in large-scale warfare along the entire border in the months of October and November. Why? Has China's policy toward India been different from her policy toward Burma and Nepal? Or has India, unlike Burma and Nepal, been unwilling to enter upon the road of compromise?

On these questions the record is absolutely clear. China has repeatedly asked for negotiations on the basis of the status quo as it existed in 1959 when the border clashes began. India has at all times insisted that all of her own principal claims must be conceded before the detailed work of demarcating the border could begin. Thus there can be no doubt whatever that it is India and not China that has stood in the way of a settlement through compromise. But before we can go a step further and lay the blame for the present conflict on India, we must examine the status quo of 1959 which China proposes should be the basis of the bargaining process. Was the situation which then existed specially disadvantageous for India? Would its acceptance by India have been inconsistent with the dignity and honor of a nation which had only recently won its independence and, was justifiably jealous of its sovereignty? To answer these questions, we must recall the salient facts of the situation as it existed in 1959.

The Sino-Indian border is divided into three sectors. The western sector separates the Ladakh area of the state of Kashmir on the Indian side from Sinkiang (Chinese Turkestan) and Tibet on the Chinese side. The middle sector separates the Indian states of Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh from Tibet. And the eastern sector separates the Indian state of Assam from Tibet. The major disputes concern the eastern and western sectors.

In the east, the Indians were in actual control of the area to the south of the so-called McMahon Line. The McMahon Line runs through the peaks of the Himalayan mountains and in general is based on the watershed principle (all lands through which waters flow to the north being on one side of the Line and lands through which waters flow to the south being on the other side). It was named after the British delegate at a 1914 conference held in Simla, India, attended by representatives of

Britain, China, and Tibet. The Chinese government did not accept or recognize the McMahon Line at that time, and no Chinese government ever has since. Chiang Kai-shek is as much opposed to it as Mao Tse-tung. The Chinese claim that the traditional boundary had included the entire southern slope of the Himalayas in Tibet, and that the area between this traditional boundary and the McMahon Line (some 35,000 square miles, including much good farmland and valuable forests) had been stolen from China by British imperialism. It was organized by the British as a special border territory called the Northeast Frontier Agency (NEFA) and retains that status today under Indian rule. The Indians belittle the Chinese claim, asserting that "there is no doubt that the McMahon Line . . . merely confirmed the natural, traditional, ethnic and administrative boundary in the area."* We do not pretend to any expert knowledge on this question, but the fact that such authoritative (and certainly not anti-Indian) sources as the 1929 edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and the 1940 *Oxford Advanced Atlas (Bartholomew)* show the border as claimed by China hardly lends support to the Indian contention. From what evidence we have been able to collect, apart from India's bare assertions, the Chinese charge that India holds the NEFA solely as the heir of British imperialism seems all too well founded.

In the west, the situation in 1959 was altogether different. The Chinese claim that the traditional border between China and Ladakh has for centuries been the Karakoram mountain range, considerably to the south and west of the Indian conception of the border. But prior to 1954, even the Indians did not assert that the line had ever been demarcated. *Peking Review* of November 30th reproduces a map published by the Survey of India (an official government agency) in 1950 entitled "India Showing Political Divisions in the New Republic." The whole border area between Jammu and Kashmir on the one side and Tibet on the other bears the inscription "boundary undefined." *Peking Review* also reproduces a map published by the Survey of India in 1954 entitled "Political Map of

* "Background Report: India-China Border Problem," *Weekly India News* (published by the Embassy of India, Washington, D. C.), November 30. This article contains a detailed statement of India's case.

India." On this later map, the boundary is drawn very precisely indeed. What had happened in the meantime to produce this remarkable clarification of the situation? The explanation was apparently provided by Nehru in a speech to the Lok Sabha (Lower House) on February 21, 1961. We quote:

When the Chinese forces first entered Tibet, that is ten years ago in 1950-51, frankly we did not expect any trouble on our border but, naturally, looking at things in historical perspective, we thought that the whole nature of our border had changed. It was a dead border, it was now becoming alive, and we began to think in terms of the protection of that border, that is, the border with Tibet at that time.

Our attention was first directed, naturally or not, to these borders, and a high level, high power committee was appointed, the Border Defense Committee, right then in 1951 or 1952, I forget. This Committee presented a comprehensive report, and many of the suggestions were accepted by Government, some were not. This was ten years ago.*

It would seem that one of the first things the Border Defense Committee did was to define precisely what border it proposed to defend. This was done unilaterally, of course, without in any way consulting China.

In the meantime, the Chinese Red Army had entered Tibet from Sinkiang—primarily to mop up Kuomintang forces—via the Aksai Chin plateau, well to the east of the Karakoram range but within the territory India was to claim as hers. An old caravan route which the Chinese had been using since time immemorial passed through this region and provided the only practicable route from Sinkiang to the interior of Tibet. The Chinese authorities established military and administrative control over the Aksai Chin plateau, and several years later—in 1956-1957—transformed the caravan route into the Sinkiang-Tibet Highway which Chinese Premier Chou En-lai, in his letter of November 15th to the heads of Asian and African countries, described as a "gigantic task of engineering."**

Why didn't the Indians, who had already laid claim to this

* WICR, p. 66. A good deal might be cleared up if the Government of India would publish this report.

**This important document is published in the *Peking Review* of November 30, 1962.

area in their map of 1954, protest against these Chinese "incursions" at the time when they were taking place? Why did they wait until 1959, two years after the highway had been completed? The answer is very simple: *the Indians had no idea what was going on in Aksai Chin*. Here is the way Nehru explained the matter to the Lok Sabha on February 23, 1961:

There were some seasonal caravan routes in the Aksai Chin area which had been used for a long time past by caravans. The Chinese used them also in the past, when we did not connect it with any kind of aggression. It was a common practice. This is right in the northeastern bit. . . . This was not supposed to mean sovereignty. It was a caravan route being used by any party. This is a Central Asian route. There were very few roads or routes there, and it was supposed to be open traffic.

In 1955—we did not know this date then, we found out later—the Chinese started levelling the caravan route for the purpose of using it as a motorable tract. It took them about a couple of years. It was not clear to us then whether this proposed motor way crossed our territory. The first suspicion that this might be so came to us in 1957, from a map published in Peking. . . . We did not even then know definitely whether this transgressed our territory. The map was a small map, but half a magazine page. We did not know, but we began to suspect it. As we did not have proof, we did not know, but we began to suspect it. As we did not have proof, we did not protest then. (WICR, p. 67.)

But, you may ask, how is it possible that a country doesn't know what is going on in part of what it claims to be its territory? Again, the answer is simple: India had never actually occupied the area, and in fact there are no roads or other regular communication routes between India and Aksai Chin. The area is forbidding mountain country, practically uninhabited except for nomads grazing their flocks in the valleys in summer-time. The only usable access is *not* from India but via the caravan-route-turned-highway from Sinkiang to Tibet. Once again, a quotation from a Nehru statement in the Lok Sabha (August 28, 1959) will help to clarify the situation as it then existed. Answering a question about the Chinese road, Nehru said:

The House will appreciate that these areas are extraordinarily remote, almost inaccessible, and even if they can be approached, it takes weeks and weeks to march and get there.

In that connection, a reconnaissance party was sent there, I

cannot say exactly when, but I think it was a little over a year ago. . . . In fact, two parties were sent; one of them did not return and [the] other returned. . . . When it did not return, we waited for it two or three weeks, because these were remote areas. When it did not return, we suspected that it might have been apprehended or captured by Chinese authorities on the border.

So we addressed the Chinese authorities . . . about a month after this incident; and they said, yes, some of our people had violated their border and come into their territory, and they had been apprehended, but because of their relations with us, etc., they were going to release them, and they did . . . after they had been with them about a month or so. That is concerning this road about which the Hon. Member was inquiring. In all this area, there is no actual demarcation. So far as we are concerned, our maps are clear that this is within the territory of the Union of India. It may be that some of the parts are not clearly demarcated or anything like that. But obviously if there is any dispute over any particular area, that is a matter to be discussed.

I may say that this area has nothing to do with the McMahon Line. The McMahon Line does not extend to the Ladakh areas; it is only on the other side. This was the boundary of the old Kashmir State with Tibet and Chinese Turkestan. Nobody had marked it. But after some kind of broad surveys, the then Government had laid down that border which we have been accepting and acknowledging. . . . But it is a fact that part of Ladakh is broadly covered by the wide "sweep of their [Chinese] maps." (WICR, p. 53.)

The situation on the western sector of the Sino-Indian border in 1959, then, can be summed up as follows: Both sides had what they considered to be valid historical claims to the Aksai Chin plateau. The Indians had never had administrative control over the area, and prior to 1950 it seems likely that the Chinese had not either. But in that year, the Chinese Red Army came in via the old caravan route and established Chinese control. In 1956-1957 the Chinese turned the caravan route into a modern highway connecting their two westernmost provinces. The Indians got their first inkling of this activity from a magazine published in Peking. In 1958, they sent reconnaissance parties into the area who found Chinese in possession. One of the parties was arrested and held for about a month.

The Indians still did not raise the issue publicly, and it is not possible to speak of a border dispute until a year later, in the spring and summer of 1959. Why this delay? The answer,

it would seem, is that by 1958 Sino-Indian friendship was apparently well established and looked upon with great favor by the Indian people. To disrupt it over a piece of barren and unpopulated territory which the Indians couldn't even get to except after weeks of trekking through the mountains would have seemed frivolous and quite possibly would have been politically dangerous. A year later the situation was quite different. What changed it was the Tibetan rebellion of March, 1959. There is no space here to analyze this important event, or to discuss the ways in which it affected the status of Tibet within China or the interests of India. Suffice it to say that the suppression of the rebellion by Chinese forces both offended and frightened the Indian ruling class. A great hue and cry was raised in the Indian press and indeed throughout the capitalist world: the Chinese were violating the autonomy agreement of 1951, religion was being suppressed, the feudal landlords and lamas were being deprived of their freedom (to exploit their serfs in the most ruthless and brutal way), etc. Anti-Chinese sentiments were stirred up in every possible way. In this changed political atmosphere, the problem of the Sino-Indian border took on a new aspect.

Now putting together the situation as it existed in 1959 in the east with that in the west, we get the following overall picture: In both areas certain regions were in dispute (35,000 square miles in the east and 13,000 square miles in the west). In the east, the Indians were in possession of the disputed area; in the west, the Chinese. It was in these circumstances that the rebellion of the Tibetan oligarchy erupted and was put down. Shortly afterwards, the Indians began to send patrols into Chinese-held territory and to establish military strong points. In August, the first blood was drawn at Longju which the Indians claimed was to the south and the Chinese to the north of the McMahon Line. Two months later, an even more serious clash occurred at the Kongka Pass in the western sector. Reacting to these events, the Chinese on November 7, 1959 (a date which has figured prominently in Chinese statements and proposals of the past two months), proposed that both sides withdraw 20 kilometers from the actual line of control and enter into negotiations to settle the location of the boundary.

The implications of this proposal were clear: the status quo should be taken as the basis of negotiations. In the east, the Chinese were in effect offering to accept the McMahon Line, provided the Indians would accept in the west a line which in the main coincided with what the Chinese regarded as the traditional boundary. The Indians rejected this offer then and have consistently rejected it ever since. No negotiations could take place, they said and still say, unless and until the Chinese accept not only the McMahon Line but also India's unilateral definition of the boundary in the west.

We can now answer the question posed earlier, whether the compromise offered by China was disadvantageous to India or damaging to her honor and dignity. It is very hard to see how any rational person could so regard it. India would be getting legal recognition of her possession of a valuable area in the east in exchange for giving up a claim to an area in the west which India had never occupied, which by no stretch of the imagination could be considered to have any value to her, and which indeed India could reach only with the greatest of difficulty. It was rather China that would have to swallow a bitter pill by recognizing the McMahon Line which for all Chinese is a hated symbol of China's past weakness and humiliation at the hands of Western imperialism. That China nevertheless made the offer testifies not only to the economic and strategic importance to *China* of the Singkiang-Tibet Highway, but also to a sober sense of realism and a desire for peace. The Indians were in control up to the McMahon Line and the Chinese knew that they could not be displaced except by military means. They did not want a war and *proved* that they were willing to make sacrifices in order to avoid one.

Everything that has happened since 1959 followed with all the inevitability of a classic tragedy from India's rejection of the only compromise that could have led to a peaceful settlement of the border dispute. Having defined the Chinese occupation of Aksai Chin as "aggression"—Nehru used the term in the Lok Sabha on April 26, 1960, immediately after talks in New Delhi with Chou En-lai—India quite logically began to apply military pressure in an effort to oust the Chinese from their positions in the Ladakh area. During the next two years, the In-

dians pressed forward to the accompaniment of increasing clashes. Chou En-lai gave the following account of what happened in his November 15, 1962, letter to the heads of Asian and African countries:

Prior to the recent general outbreak of clashes on the border, India had established a total of 43 strongpoints encroaching on Chinese territory in the western sector of the border. . . . Some were set up only a few meters away from Chinese posts, others even behind Chinese posts, cutting off their access to the rear. As Prime Minister Nehru put it in addressing the Indian Lok Sabha on June 29, 1962, "India had opened some new patrol posts endangering the Chinese posts and it was largely due to movements on our side that the Chinese had also to make movements. *It is well known in knowledgeable circles in the world that the position in this area had been changing to our advantage and the Chinese are concerned about it.*" The Indian weekly *Blitz* openly boasted at the time that India had occupied 2,500 square miles of territory there, which the weekly described as a "unique triumph for an audacious Napoleonic planning" worked out by Defense Minister Krishna Menon. Invading Indian troops again and again launched armed provocations against Chinese frontier guards. Indian aircraft again and again violated China's air space and recklessly carried out harassing raids. As a result of these increasingly frequent acts of provocation on the part of India, the situation in the western sector of the Sino-Indian border grew sharply in tension and gravity. [Emphasis added.]

Achieving successes against relatively light Chinese resistance in the west, India proceeded to apply similar tactics in the eastern and middle sectors, the targets being Chinese-held points which India claimed to be south of either the McMahon Line or the middle boundary as unilaterally defined by New Delhi.

This, then, was the background to the outbreak of hostilities all along the border on October 20, 1962. At the time, this was presented by the U.S. press as resulting from an unprovoked general attack by China. We must confess that at first we were strongly inclined to accept this version of events, largely because it seemed so incredible that the Indians would court certain disaster by themselves launching large-scale offensive actions. But a careful re-reading of the *New York Times* during the month of October leaves little doubt that this is in fact just what the Indians did. Early in the month, a new Indian army

corps "assigned to the anti-Chinese operation" was formed under the command of Lieut. Gen. B. M. Kaul. An AP dispatch of October 11th reported "the most serious battle in three years" and added: "The firing broke out even as authoritative sources in New Delhi predicted that Indian forces were about to move in an effort to oust the Chinese from Himalayan territory." On October 12th Nehru declared that his government had ordered Indian troops "to free our territory in the northeast frontier." The "News of the Week" section of the *Sunday Times* of October 14th stated: "India is clearly out to make the point that she will resist physical incursions by the Chinese, and in the Dhola area she apparently has the force to do it. Once the point is made, the Indians probably would be willing to undertake negotiations. The question is what card Peking will choose to play in the deepening crisis." (The answer would not be long in coming.) The same day's paper reported from New Delhi that "Army commanders who have been ordered to oust the Chinese troops from the northeast frontier area left for their headquarters at Tezpur, Assam, during the day after consultations with the Defense Ministry." On October 15th, a Hong Kong report quoted extensively from a front-page editorial in *Jenmin Jih Pao*, organ of the Chinese CP, warning India to "pull back from the brink of the precipice." All points held by China in the east were to the north of the "illegal McMahon Line." China was "absolutely unwilling to cross swords with India" and had persistently sought a peaceful settlement. "What pains us is the fact that China's sincere desire to uphold Sino-Indian friendship should have been taken by the Indian reactionary ruling circles represented by Nehru as affording an excellent opportunity for them to embark on expansionist adventures." At the bottom of the same column was a one-inch Reuters dispatch from Bangalore: "Defense Minister V. K. Krishna Menon said here today that India was determined to throw the Chinese from Indian soil. 'We will fight to the last man, to the last gun,' he declared." On October 20th, the Chinese announced large-scale attacks by Indian troops at several points on the frontier, resulting in heavy Chinese casualties. A parenthetical insert in the same story stated: "Reports in New Delhi Friday [the 19th], neither confirmed nor denied by

the Indian government, said that Indian troops had pushed intruding Chinese Communist units back about two miles in one area of the frontier zone. New Delhi indicated that a heavy snowfall on the Tibetan border had curbed activity, but a spokesman called the situation 'fluid.'"

After we had assembled and collated the foregoing material from the *New York Times*, there arrived in the mail *I. F. Stone's Weekly* for December 10th with a wealth of very revealing material culled from the British press to support the same view, that it was India and not China that initiated the large-scale fighting of October.

Why did the Indians do it? One can only speculate that they must have been very badly informed about Chinese strength and/or that their successful advances of the previous two years had misled them into believing that the Chinese would continue to fall back indefinitely rather than risk a general war. One other possibility suggests itself: that the extreme reactionaries in the Congress Party and the army somehow managed to push the government into large-scale offensive action, knowing full well that the result might be a military disaster. The reasons would of course be political—to get rid of Krishna Menon, to undermine Nehru's position, to whip up war hysteria, to force India to seek military aid from the West. The plausibility of this hypothesis evidently derives from the fact that the political consequences were exactly as described.

As for the Chinese counter-attack, it must of course have been contemplated and prepared over a considerable period of time. Neither the massive striking force nor the perfection of military planning and execution displayed by the Chinese could have been hastily improvised (Kingsley Martin, reporting from Delhi in the London *New Statesman*, called it "one of the most brilliant operations in history"). What probably happened was that India's consistent refusal to negotiate on reasonable terms and her aggressive tactics from 1959 on, gradually convinced the Chinese that they would sooner or later have to administer a severe defeat to the Indians. The events of October signalled that the time had come.

It is hard to see what alternative the Chinese had. They were prepared to make generous concessions on the McMahon

Line, but it is obvious that they could not and would not yield up Aksai Chin where they had made such a large investment—and one, moreover, which the Indians couldn't possibly use even if they had it. They couldn't very well accept the prospect of a border in perpetual turmoil. What else could they do but slap the Indians down and then offer to re-establish the status quo ante as a basis for negotiation?

There is reason to believe that more sober elements in India, and among India's backers in the West, are aware that the path of wisdom would now be to accept the Chinese offer and liquidate the whole miserable frontier dispute. In this connection, it may be worthwhile to quote at considerable length from an editorial in the *New York Times* of November 28th:

Communist China's truce proposals in the Sino-Indian border war present the Indian government with an increasingly difficult decision. Nonaligned nations have now joined the Communists in urging India to take up the Chinese offer, while the contrary views of those in and outside India who oppose the proposition have notably hardened.

New Delhi's dilemma is intensified by the fact that the kind of ultimate settlement implicit in the Chinese scheme is one that India might well be wise to accept with certain modifications. . . . It is highly improbable that the Chinese would ever make a more generous proposal unless they should suffer a major military defeat.

To concede the Ladakh area to the Chinese would give the control of passes and access routes of great importance to China, while the loss for India—while impairing her defense line—would not be vital. Retention of the defensible McMahon Line in the northeast, guarding the valuable oil and tea-producing Brahmaputra Valley, is the key consideration for India. . . .

Meanwhile, Mr. Nehru and his advisers are having to consider the truce offer in a domestic atmosphere supercharged with resentment against the Chinese and seemingly opposed to any concessions. Nevertheless, the proposals merit a realistic appraisal. Washington is well advised to keep pressures off on the decisions. This country has no desire to encourage India into a crippling war with Communist China if it can be avoided. Such a war would very possibly shatter India, wreck the prospects of a *modus vivendi* between the United States and Russia, and disrupt the already uneasy equilibrium of South and Southeast Asia.

From New Delhi, *New York Times* correspondent Paul Grimes reported a few days later in a somewhat similar vein:

In New Delhi, there were persistent but unconfirmed reports that India might be prepared to make at least a tacit concession to Peking [has the *Times* at long last reconciled itself to the change-over from Peiping to Peking?]. The reports said this might take the form of some sort of understanding that if the Chinese withdraw from their forward positions in the Ladakh area of Kashmir, Indian forces would not attempt to reoccupy them.

The major stake in Ladakh is a road that the Chinese built across the Aksai Chin plateau five years ago to link Singkiang Province with Tibet. Peking has made clear time and again that it is determined to keep this road but that it does not care so much about other border areas claimed by India.

After India's recent military reverses, the Foreign Ministry here appears to have tacitly acknowledged that India stands little chance of recapturing the Aksai Chin region and might as well write it off. The thinking in the highest official circles seems to be that the less India provokes the Chinese in Ladakh, the better will be her chances of reoccupying lost territory in the Northeast Frontier Agency area.

But to make such an admission publicly or in a formal understanding with Peking would be politically perilous for the Nehru government. Opposition leaders are shouting that the Chinese must be pushed back and Indian integrity defended, whatever the cost.

Yet, the reports say, the government would like its tacit assurances to get both to Peking and to Colombo, Ceylon, where representatives of a number of nonaligned Asian and African countries are scheduled to begin talks Monday [December 10] on the Indian-Chinese dispute. (*New York Times*, December 6.)

It thus appears that voices of reason and moderation, though notably muted, are not altogether absent from either the United States or India. But unfortunately, there is not too much hope that they will prevail. The reasons are of course complicated, but we do not think it is a misleading oversimplification to sum them up in two propositions: (1) Just as the ruling class of the United States needs the Cold War,* so the ruling class of India needs the border dispute with China. (2) So far as the United States is concerned, the dispute opens up a new and immensely promising Cold War front. Within the framework of this brief editorial, we can attempt no more than a few notes in amplification.

* See "The Theory of U. S. Foreign Policy," *MR*, September, October, November, 1960.

To see why the Indian ruling class needs the dispute with China, it is necessary to understand what kind of a ruling class it is and what its problems are. Though one often hears the term "feudalism" applied to India, the ruling class is in no sense a feudal aristocracy. The country is, to be sure, still overwhelmingly agricultural, but the part of the rural economy that counts—subsistence farmers are really outside the society altogether and, short of revolt, have no power to influence its functioning—is commercial and for the most part nourishes a petty and middle bourgeoisie. These, along with their urban counterparts, are the followers and supporters of the "power elite" which is made up of the big industrialists like the Tatas and the Birlas, the big merchants, the bankers, and the upper echelons of the state apparatus (including the army) which are deeply steeped in British ideas and habits of thought. The real ruling class, in short, is the big bourgeoisie, thoroughly capitalist in origin and mentality and wholly committed to a capitalist future for India. The "socialism" which is professed by their political instrument, the Congress Party, like many another "socialism" in our period of history, is nothing but a vote-catching cover-up for their massive use of the state power to promote the development of capitalism and thus serve their own private interests.

Unfortunately for the Indian ruling class, capitalism does not and cannot solve the problems of an underdeveloped country under the technological and demographic conditions prevailing in the second half of the 20th century. Even where circumstances are favorable and relatively rapid development is actually achieved, the benefits go almost entirely to the privileged few, while for the masses the gap between what is and what might be grows ever wider and more frustrating.* Circumstances in India are anything but favorable. The land system, with the vast network of vested interests attached to it, blocks the modernization of agriculture, which in turn would be the *conditio sine qua non* of rapid capital accumulation and industrialization.

* Mexico, our nearest neighbor to the south, is a classic example. See the brilliant article, "Mexico: the Janus Faces of 20th-Century Bourgeois Revolution," by Andrew Gunder Frank in the October, 1962, issue of *MR*.

Ancient divisions of caste, religion, and language keep the people divided, mutually suspicious, and apathetic. Such progress as has been achieved has barely been enough to keep up with population growth; so far as the overwhelming majority are concerned, there has been no improvement in the past and there is no hope of improvement in the visible future.

All this would not trouble the big bourgeoisie unduly, if only there were a guarantee that the masses would remain apathetic and hopeless. This has after all been the condition of most people throughout history, and ruling classes have always had the fortitude to bear it. But experience from the most varied parts of the globe during the past few decades proves beyond a shadow of doubt that such a guarantee is precisely what no ruling class can take for granted today. And the Indian rulers are daily reminded of this by the fact that India's next-door neighbor, the country most nearly comparable to their own in population and stage of economic development, having only recently overthrown its own ruling class, is in a heroic period of stormy and spectacular development.

True, there have as yet been few signs of restiveness on the part of the Indian masses: the general mood is still one of acceptance of the status quo. But there are more than enough reasons of a temporary and non-recurring sort to account for this. The unifying effect of the long struggle for independence is still potent; Nehru remains a popular hero, far overshadowing other political figures; the Congress Party's skillful propaganda about its "socialist" aims and the extensive planning activity supposedly devoted to their realization have not yet lost their magic; finally, the Chinese, while progressing much faster than the Indians, have been going through hard times, as every underdeveloped country must, and are still not able to present an obviously compelling example to their neighbors. In all these respects, however, changes have either been taking place or cannot long be postponed. Unity against the oppressor is giving way to domestic class struggle; the reign of Nehru, over 70 and in poor health, is obviously drawing to a close; the transformation of Congress from an independence movement to a corrupt, bureaucratic, reactionary instrument of capitalist rule is becoming increasingly obvious (the parallel with the Kuomintang in

China a generation earlier is painfully exact: why shouldn't history also repeat itself in the sequel?); and finally, the propaganda force of Red China's successes may lag behind their achievement, but lagging is different from non-existing.

In these circumstances, the Indian ruling class was faced with extremely difficult economic and political problems: how to speed up the rate of growth; how to keep the Congress from disintegrating (the big Communist gains in the general election of 1957 raised an ominous warning signal); how to ensure that Nehru's successor would be to the Right of him, not to the Left; more generally, how to keep India from following in China's footsteps on the road to social revolution, the only road which promised a new and better life for the great mass of the Indian people.

It is only as the Indian ruling class's response to a need for solutions to these problems that the border dispute can be understood. More foreign aid would be the means of stepping up the rate of growth. But to get it from the only source that could provide it, India would have to abandon the extremely popular policy of non-alignment and join the Western system of alliances. This could be done only if the people could be persuaded of its absolute necessity. Hence the need for a war crisis. With nationalist feeling once again whipped up, as in the days of the struggle for independence, Congress could expect a new lease on life (the general election of 1962, signalling a gratifying decline in Communist strength, proved the point). Wars and threats of wars always generate a political atmosphere in which the Right flourishes and the Left languishes (the right wing of the Congress is already in control and will probably step forward openly when Nehru goes). Finally, and perhaps most important of all, with Indians and Chinese locked in combat, the Indian people could be stampeded into seeing both China and Communism as their mortal enemies rather than as potential models to learn from and emulate.

This, we believe, is the real meaning of the border dispute, a dispute which India was able to provoke easily and unilaterally, by the simple means of refusing to compromise and instead making demands on China which would be certain to be rejected. In saying this, we are not suggesting that a group of

Indian Big Businessmen and generals got together one fine day and decided that a fight with China was the answer to their problems. Things rarely if ever happen that way. A ruling class always knows, instinctively as it were, the kind of actions and policies that are calculated to promote what it regards as its interests. And the "good" policies are sanctified by all the society's holies—love of freedom (or order or tradition or what not), national honor, religious interest, etc. What is involved is a process of rationalization in the sense that psychiatry uses the term; there usually is more than a trace of rational calculation involved, but there need not be. If the Indian ruling class had felt that a settlement with China was in its interest, it could have reached one with as little fuss and fanfare as Burma and Nepal did. One can imagine the boastful headlines about China's having finally admitted that India had justice on her side in the matter of the McMahon Line, in exchange for which India had given up an absolutely worthless patch of rock and snow. What a bargain! But instead, the banner of India's honor and integrity was raised in a great outburst of publicity and propaganda. The underlying population, as Veblen might have said, swelled with pride and prepared to pay the bill.

But how does it happen that men like Nehru and Krishna Menon—men of good will, socialists at heart, intellectuals who understand much about the historical past and present—how does it happen that they should allow themselves to be the instruments and ultimately the victims of the ambitions and policies of the Indian big bourgeoisie? This is a theme worthy of great literature: here we can only suggest some of the factors involved. Partly, the explanation lies in deeply rooted personality traits. Nehru and Krishna Menon are undoubtedly vain men, lovers of power and fame. At the present time in India, however, these are in the gift of the big bourgeoisie, not of the working class or the poor peasantry. Partly, it is a matter of certain attitudes and habits of thought inherited from the past. Most of India's educated men and women have been profoundly influenced by their British or British-type education; despite their resentment of past British dominance, now that they are the rulers themselves—or in the service of the rulers—they think and act much as the British did before them. Among

other things, they share the imperialist attitude toward the "heathen Chinese" and feel themselves entitled to adopt the same posture and play the same role vis-à-vis their neighbors that the British did. But above all, the Nehrus and the Krishna Menons are victims of an illusion, or perhaps it is a self-deception, which has recurred again and again in the course of history. They sincerely want to play a progressive role, and they believe that however bad things are or however unpromising the situation, they can by their own efforts bring about some measure of improvement. "The Congress Party has its weaknesses," they argue, "but let us stay in it and do our best to reform it, to make our own views and goals prevail." In saying this, they fall into a trap from which escape is all but impossible; they become first the prisoners and then the tools of their enemies. And, sad to say, they usually end up rationalizing their position and joining their enemies. It is an old, old story in the West: the history of the socialist movement is full of such betrayals. We should not be surprised to see the same thing happening in India.

So much for the needs of India's ruling class and the means of their satisfaction. When we come to the role of the United States, we can be much briefer. The Cold War is, of course, a war to rid the world of socialism, and China is therefore an arch-enemy. The more troubles China has, the better the United States likes it. But in this case, China's troubles are only part of the harvest. To the U.S. ruling class, neutralism is anathema: the neutralist country is not only not with us, it is half-way to being against us; and as things have been going, it may at any time travel the rest of the way. How much better to have it safely in our camp, complete with military alliances, occupation bases, and all the rest! It only needs to be added that India has been by far the largest and potentially the most influential of the neutralist states. It has therefore long been U.S. policy to coax or entice India out of the neutralist camp and into the Western bloc. That, as a result of the Sino-Indian conflict, India now gives every sign of scurrying in under her own power is a source of gratification such as the U.S. ruling class has not experienced for a long, long time.*

* Until very recently, we were inclined to blame the Chinese for allow-

The purring in the State Department, the Pentagon, and the nation's editorial offices has been as audible as the gnashing of teeth at India's "immoral" neutralism used to be. The prospects now opening up in Asia seem limitless, and all favorable.

And yet, from any longer run point of view, it is a fool's game that the Indian and U.S. ruling classes are now playing. China can, if she has to, stand the strain of a long conflict on the Indian border. India as now constituted certainly cannot. The prospective militarization of the Indian economy will ruin whatever meager prospects of development have existed up to now, and it is ridiculous to suppose that U.S. aid can somehow make good the damage that will thus be done. As conditions deteriorate, the Indian government will inevitably move more or less rapidly to the Right. Political democracy, India's greatest achievement in the eyes of the underdeveloped world, will go by the board. The only alternative is an out-and-out military dictatorship more and more openly dependent on U.S. aid.

We know what such regimes look like, and how their victims fare. They exist, for example, in South Korea and South Vietnam, both of which were dragged by blind ruling classes and Washington cold warriors into disastrous military adventures. The hunger, the suffering, the oppression, the misery, the hopelessness of the unhappy peoples of these unhappy lands, constitute one of the great tragedies of our time. That India, the second most populous country in the world, should now be hurrying down the same road is a fact—and alas, it is a fact—almost too horrible to contemplate.

But this is not all. The United States has been able, by pouring out billions of dollars, to maintain some sort of wretched status quo in South Korea and South Vietnam. It is doubtful

ing themselves to be provoked into taking actions which must inevitably have this result. A careful study of the record, however, has convinced us that this charge cannot be sustained. There was of course no aggression involved in building the Aksai Chin road, and the Chinese were, as we hope to have demonstrated above, most anxious for an honorable compromise. They even retreated for two years in the face of Indian military pressure, and Indian hostility was thoroughly aroused long before the Chinese struck back in self-defense. It takes two to keep the peace, just as it takes two to work out a compromise.

whether enough billions exist to do the same in India. If our balance of payments is in trouble now, what will the situation be when to all our other unproductive outlays is added the burden of supporting an Indian war against China and at the same time of attempting to keep the Indian economy from collapse and chaos? Is it not clear that the present drift of events contains a mortal threat not only to India but to the United States as well?

Is it hopeless to think in terms of a better policy? Is there absolutely nothing that could be done to put on the brakes and switch the train onto another track before it is too late? Obviously, the United States could not at this late stage of the game attempt to play the role of mediator, and it is unfortunately unlikely that any other country or group of countries could do so either. But there is one approach which seems to be more promising, and we strongly commend it to everyone who is sincerely interested in avoiding the disaster that now looms ahead. This new approach was well described in a letter to the editor of the *New York Times*,* and we are glad to be able to call to witness such a respectable organ of ruling-class opinion. Here are excerpts from the letter which was published under the appropriate heading, "For Himalayan Stability":

The assumption that the India-China conflict is a territorial dispute is still behind the policy followed by all governments in the region other than India. Neither Pakistan nor Burma nor Nepal has felt at all compelled to line up with India in this particular dispute.

This appraisal does not necessarily underrate the scope of the conflict. But it helps a realization that the conflict is an eruption of an underlying problem of the entire Himalayan region in which not only India and China, but also Pakistan, Kashmir, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, and Nagaland are involved.

To a large extent, the problem has arisen from the policy followed by Indian leaders rooted in their persistent misconception that they are the inheritors of British supremacy in the Himalayan region. Actually, since the withdrawal of British power, the whole political ethos and military geography of South Asia, have been

* December 5, 1962. The signature on the letter is M. Yusuf Buch, a name which is unfortunately not known to us.

transformed, and this supremacy lapsed. Hence it was not a viable policy that India could reassert over the autonomous peoples scattered all along the Himalayan region. The disregard of this simple truth is responsible as much for the conflict in Kashmir between India and Pakistan as it is for the India-China tangle. It is also responsible for India's troubles with Nepal, for Bhutan's skepticism of India's intentions, and for the Nagas' rebellion against integration with India.

Thus it might be said that the threads left loose in 1947 when the British quit India were never tied up by constructive international statesmanship. There is no cause worthier of that statesmanship nor any more likely to command the support at once of Western diplomacy, of Russian diplomacy and the diplomacy of the nonaligned powers (now minus India) than to repair this neglect and to work for a stable settlement of the entire Himalayan region ranging from Kashmir in the west to Nagaland in the east.

Such a settlement cannot be secured through bilateral negotiations between India and Pakistan and between China and India. An international conference on the pattern of the Geneva Peace Conference on Indochina is the one diplomatic objective which should commend itself to all powers concerned with insuring peace in Asia. . . .

The conference's aims would be:

To secure a final disposition of the State of Jammu and Kashmir in accordance with the wishes of the people of the state;

To secure a final disposition of Nagaland and other tribal areas, again in accordance with the wishes of their people;

To determine finally the status of Bhutan and Sikkim;

To adjust the claims of India and China with regard to the McMahon Line after obtaining the advice of the International Court of Justice regarding its legal validity and after investigation by a competent commission;

To adjust the border between China and the Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir State, taking in view the legitimate interests of each party;

To furnish an international guarantee regarding the settlements arrived at on each of the above heads and to conclude a comprehensive treaty for the purpose.

It may be that the treaty would provide for the independence of one or more of the areas involved and also for their demilitarization under a firm guarantee of international support in their defense in case of invasion or encroachment from any side.

The alternative to some diplomatic objective of this nature, it is obvious, is a war of attrition between China and India which

will not only ruin India but may also engulf other neighboring nations and peoples.

To this we say "amen" and add the postscript that not only India and neighboring nations and peoples may be ruined but also the United States and quite possibly the whole world.

(December 15, 1962)

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