

Letter from Jawaharlal Nehru to Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit

The Situation in Tibet¹

Your telegram 0729 of March 25. Not much news about the situation in Lhasa has been received from our Consulate General since my last statement in Parliament. Our Consulate General is now guarded by a Chinese military detachment and apparently the Consul General is now isolated in his premises. We are finding out whether any restriction has been imposed on his movement. Meantime from such information as has reached him Consul General reports that important buildings in Lhasa including some monasteries have received considerable damage as a result of Chinese firing and shelling. Dalai Lama's palace Potala and his summer residence Norbulingka are also reported to have sustained more or less serious damage. Tibetan local Government has ceased functioning and the Chinese Military Commission has taken control in the Lhasa area. We have no information about the situation in the rest of Tibet. Dalai Lama left Lhasa three days before the troubles broke out. His present whereabouts are not known. Both the Tibetans and Chinese agree that the 17point agreement of 1951 has broken down. Future is uncertain but I fear that the Tibetans are in for a period of severe treatment from the Chinese.

2. There is considerable concern in India about the situation in Tibet in general and sympathy for the Dalai Lama and the Tibetans. We are faced with a difficult situation. It would clearly not be wise for us to do or say things which would make the position of the Tibetans still more difficult. We have not made any approach to the Chinese Government. They have told Parthasarathi in Peking that the present troubles are due to instigation by

¹ Telegram, 26 March 1959

the Americans and Chiang Kai-shek. It is difficult for us to say what truth there is in this allegation.