

SELECTED WORKS OF JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

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To Ministry of Home Affairs¹

I saw Dr. Verrier Elwin² today. He had recently been to Manipur and Tripura and he told me that he was very worried about the tribal situation in these States. He spoke highly of Raina,³ Chief Commissioner of Manipur, but then he said that some experienced senior grade officers in these two States, who belong to the IAPS⁴ and had been brought from NEFA, were spending all their time in doing revenue and like work. Their special training in tribal work was thus not utilised and they could not spend much time over it. He suggested that one such IAPS officer both in Manipur and Tripura might be asked especially to look after tribal affairs which required a great deal of looking after.

2. Dr. Verrier Elwin had been asked by us to visit Tripura and Manipur occasionally and offer such suggestions as he has to make about conditions there and what should be done in regard to tribal affairs. It was in this connection that he went there. He said, however, that his visits did not help as much as they might otherwise do as he did not know what was being done and saw no papers, etc. He had no connection with either Tripura or Manipur. If a somewhat closer connection could be evolved, he might prove much more helpful. He suggested that if he was asked officially to advise on

¹ Note, 28 Jan. 1959.

² British anthropologist who worked in the North Eastern region of India; Adviser to the Governor of Assam.

³ Jagat Mohan Nath Raina.

⁴ In fact, it is IFAS.

tribal affairs in Manipur and Tripura, this closer connection might be established.

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81. To Subimal Dutt⁵

Dr. Vernier Elwin came to see me today. He spoke to me about Manipur and Tripura which he had visited. I am dealing about that aspect with the Home Ministry.

2. Then he spoke to me about NEFA and said that the amount of paper work that our political officers have to do there is fantastic. They are constantly preparing reports for various Ministries here, including Commerce & Industry, Food & Agriculture, Community Development, etc. In fact, he said that External Affairs was on the whole kind to them in this matter. I suppose that every circular that is sent to various states by the different Ministries is sent to NEFA also, whether it applies to it or not, and so all kinds of trade and production figures are asked for. Some of the examples he gave me sounded ridiculous.

3. All this paper work and reporting takes up a great deal of time of the political officers and diverts them from their principal duty, that is, looking after the tribal people. Could we save them from this rather unnecessary work and limit the reporting to only such matters as are necessary for NEFA?

4. He spoke to me also about the people living on the Tibet border who are emotionally attracted to Tibet. The Tibetan officers on the other side are often telling them that they would be coming back there and attaching them to Tibet. The problem is how to integrate them emotionally to India. It was for this purpose that we had suggested some time ago that school

⁵ Note to FS, 28 Jan. 1959. File No. 11 (3)-NEFA/58, MHA. Also available in JN Collection.

buildings and the like might be given a Tibetan look which would be much appreciated. Also, certain solidity to give a sense of permanence. He said that some designs had been made for such buildings. They were good designs, but they were also more expensive. On this ground of expense, Finance had objected. Elwin said that so far as the general school buildings, etc. were concerned, they should be as simple and cheap as possible, but it would be desirable near the border to put up just a few more solid and pretentious buildings, partly after the Tibetan style. This would impress people there. This matter appears to deserve consideration.

5. Then he referred to the attempts being made to build up big villages instead of scattered population. He had once written about this and there was rather a long note in reply from, perhaps, our Ministry pointing out the advantages of these bigger villages. Some of the advantages are obvious. We could have a school there and other activities. Nevertheless, Verrier Elwin thought that uprooting people from their scattered dwellings was not desirable. They are deeply attached to their land and many other matters, and such removal was not liked and creates some feeling of resentment. He said that these tribal people do not think of walking a few miles as of any consequence and are used to it.

6. Lastly, he again referred to what in fact we have said, i.e. any attempt at imposing something on the people should be avoided. This would not be merely a question of not giving orders, but avoiding the methods of subtle pressure. They are simple folk who take even a hint as an order.

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To N. R. Pillai, Subimal Dutt and B. N. Chakravarty⁶

⁶ Note to SG, FS and SS, 16 Feb. 1959

I enclose a letter from the Governor of Assam about Major Khathing.⁷ I do not know what the facts are but it is clear to me that, in the present circumstances, we cannot reduce Major Khathing's basic pay. If there is any rule contrary to this, that rule will have to be by-passed in this case and some special decision will have to be taken. The Naga situation is a difficult one and Major Khathing has distinguished himself. In fact, he has been given one of the President's Awards. After that to go by some rule and do something which will have the contrary effect will be rather absurd.

2. You might draw the attention of the Finance Ministry to this and if there is any difficulty, the Finance Minister⁸ might be good enough to speak to me.

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⁷ Ranenglao Khathing (1912-1990); nicknamed "Bob" by Americans during World War II; Tangkhul Naga from Manipur; taught at Ukhrul High School, 1937-39; enlisted and commissioned into the 9/11 Hyderabad Regiment; transferred to the newly raised Assam Regiment in Shillong, 1942; distinguished himself during the War in Ukhrul area, and awarded the Military Cross; Minister in charge of Hill Administration under Maharajkumar Priabrata Singh of Manipur, October 1947-49 (till Manipur's merger with the Indian Union); joined Assam Rifles, 1950; taken into IFAS, 1951 and appointed Assistant Political Officer, and sent to Tawang to reorganise the administration there. He "declared that under the 1914 Shimla Treaty the area South of Macmahon Line belonged to India, and by show of force he made the Tibetans to withdraw. He exempted taxes and arranged material relief for the population. His assertion that Lhasa would not be permitted to exercise authority south of Bumla laid the seeds for eventual integration of the strategic area into Indian Union." [Excerpt from letter from Col. (Retd) V. K. Singh, Deputy Director (Administration), USI of India, 24 Feb. 2012]; Deputy Commissioner, Mokukchung, Naga Rills, 1953-57; attended National Defence College, New Delhi, July 1961- Apr. 1962; sent on deputation to Sikkim Government as Development Commissioner, 1962; Security Commissioner, NEFA at Tezpur, Nov. 1962 to Jan. 1967; Chief Secretary, Nagaland, 1967-72; Indian Ambassador to Burma, 1972; Advisor to the Manipur Government during the President's Rule, 1980. [Courtesy: USI]

⁸ Morarji Desai

To Subimal Dutt and B. N. Chakravarty⁹

Broadly I agree with the approach in SS's note.¹⁰ Specific proposals might be put up for discussion.

2. I might point out that powdered milk or, perhaps, even condensed milk is now produced in the Anand Dairies of Gujarat. It is quite good. We should arrange for a supply of this to our officers in the NEFA.

3. The question of running a hostel in Shillong should be enquired into. The hostel should not be confined to the children of our officers. It should be open to scholars from the Naga Hills as well as any others.

4. I am not quite clear in my mind about a helicopter. Enquiries might be made, but helicopters are not very safe or desirable methods of travel in high mountains.¹¹

5. Among the amenities which are especially prized in isolated places are books, periodicals and radios. Obviously, each such establishment should have a radio. I do not know if there is any arrangement to send them books and periodicals. I suggested this in the case of our Mission in Tibet.

Practically, the same considerations apply in the NEFA area. A little money spent on books and periodicals would, I am sure, yield satisfactory results. From time to time, the books can be exchanged in that area.

⁹ Note to FS and SS, 19 Feb. 1959. JN Collection.

¹⁰ The Home Ministry had provided statistics of the recreational facilities in NEFA; 22 clubs from 1950-1951 now being increased to 57; reading matter like the Illustrated Weekly of India, Reader's Digest, a Hindi periodical, and daily newspapers; radio sets and sports material. In addition, while roads were being built, they proposed to use helicopters in emergencies, which led to Nehru's cautionary comment.

¹¹ B. N. Chakravarty had noted on 16 February 1959 that the difficulties of communication were being tackled by construction of jeepable roads, wherever possible, and suggested the use of helicopters in times of emergencies. This, he felt, would go a long way to remove the feeling of isolation in these areas. Helicopters, which could go up to a height of 10,000 ft, were being made in the USA and Canada, were worth acquiring as IAF helicopters could only go up to 3000 to 5000 ft.

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To K. Ram¹²

Will you please write to the Himachal Pradesh Government asking them what progress has been made in regard to the road building programme in Himachal Pradesh? Much importance has always been attached to this programme there, chiefly from the point of view of developing communications and opening out the interior which is of high importance; secondly, to give employment to people there. Because of this, the estimate for road building was increased considerably in the Second Five Year Plan and I think was made Rs. 5 crores. Presumably, therefore, there has been plenty of money available for this purpose. I should like to know how much of this money has been spent thus far, and how many new roads have been built. I should like similar figures for the First Five Year Plan and for the last two or three years of the Second Plan.

2. In particular, I am interested in the road to China towards the Tibet border. This is important for us. What progress has this made and when is it expected to be completed?

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To K. Ram¹³

Please write to Shri Datar Singh¹⁴ and also to the Kashmir Government enquiring from them about the present state of the Kargil-Leh road. Tell them that the very slow progress made in this road is disappointing as the

¹² Note to PPS, 23 Jan. 1959

¹³ Note to PPS, 28 Jan. 1959

¹⁴ Development Adviser for Kashmir, Government of India, 1955-59

growth of Ladakh largely depends on this road. This is being built for many years now at a very slow pace, and lately it appears to have stopped progressing at all. When do they expect to finish the remaining 30 or 40 miles?

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Subimal Dutt's Note to Jawaharlal Nehru

Prime Minister may kindly see Shri Acharya's note of December 30 (flag E) in the file below. It summarises a number of points on which our instructions have been sought by the NEFA Administration and others. Prime Minister need not see the correspondence referred to in the note.

2. My advice would be as follows:

- i) We should not let Khampa rebels come to Tawang. The Chinese have not yet raised a dispute with us about Tawang, but I am not sure that they will not do so some time in future. Meantime, if we allow Khampa rebels to assemble in Tawang that will provide the Chinese with an excuse for raising the bigger question of their claim to Tawang.
- ii) We should not give prominent Khampas asylum in our territory, either in the North East Frontier Agency or elsewhere. We should adhere to our general policy of not admitting able-bodied Khampa rebels into our territory and border outposts should be instructed to enforce this rule strictly.
- iii) Women and children may be admitted out of humanitarian considerations. If later the menfolk want to join them, we should not automatically give them permission to do so. Each case will have to be treated on its merits.

iv) We should prevent further congregation of Khampas in Kalimpong. Those who are already there have given rise to a law and order problem. There is no particular reason why Kalimpong should be the permanent home of a large number of Khampa and other Tibetan refugees. Even those who are allowed to stay there should be brought within the scope of the Foreigners' Registration Act so that they would have to report to the police station from time to time. That at least will provide a check on these people.

v) I do not agree with Shri K.L. Mehta's suggestion that wounded and sick rebels who reach our border outpost should be brought down to Tawang, treated there and later pushed back into Tibet. In practice we would find difficulties in doing so. Also it would not be humane to push back people after we have treated them, against their wishes, when we know for certain that they will be severely dealt with on the other side. PM will remember that some months ago a group of such people, in a similar situation, killed some members of the escort party and ran away. Later some of the persons who had escaped were found dead from cold and hunger. It will be better for our border post to give such first aid as is possible but not to take charge of the people and bring them to Tawang.

vi) There remains the case of the five Khampas who are now in detention in Gangtok. Their families are in Kalimpong. I think we should advise the Sikkim authorities to set them free, which, indeed, they wish to do. These people, when they come to Kalimpong to join their families, will be treated as foreigners and will be subject to the restrictions under the Foreigners' Act.

(S. Dutt)

9-1-59

[From S. Dutt Papers, NMML]